EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM
DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

RANGPUR

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PREFACE.

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

RANGPUR DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

General description.

THE district of Rangpur in the Rājshāhi division of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam is situated between 25° 3′ and 26° 19′ north latitude and 88° 44′ and 89° 53′ east longitude. It comprises an area, according to the latest survey, of 3,493 square miles and contains a population, as ascertained at the census of 1901, of 2,154,181 souls. The principal civil station, which is also the chief town, is Rangpur, on the Ghāghāt, in 25° 45′ north and 89° 18′ east longitude.

Origin of the name.

The generally accepted derivation of the name Rangpur is *ranga*, pleasure; and *pur*, place; that is, the place of pleasure or the abode of bliss. It is supposed that Raja Bhagadatta, the mythological king of Kamrup, whose feats are recorded in the *Mahābhārata*, possessed a country residence here on the banks of the Ghāghāt. *Pargana* Pairaband, which lies seven miles south of Rangpur, is said to be named after Pairavati, a daughter of Bhagadatta. Included in the area of the town are portions of four Revenue Survey *mauzās* known as Khōrd Rangpur, Hāt Rangpur, Bara Rangpur and Chhōta Rangpur, which are purely rural villages. No traces of a royal country residence remain in any of these *mauzās* or elsewhere in the town, nor are there any local traditions which indicate its existence in former times. On the contrary, the very name of Rangpur appears to have been unknown until comparatively recent times. No mention of it can be found in the *Mahābhārata* or any other work of Sanscrit literature. There is an uncorroborated statement in the *Tarikh-i-Farishtah** to the effect that Rangpur was founded is 1203 A.D. by the Muhammadan general Bakhtyār Khilji. As will be shown in a later chapter† this statement is not worthy of credit.

In Blaev's map of the dominions of the Great Mughal, A.D. 1645, Comotay or Kamātpur, Gaur and Dacca are shown, but one looks in vain for Rangpur. It did not give its name to any *chakla*, *sarkār* or *pargana* and it is only in the *Riyāzu-a-Salātin*,

* *Apud* Blochmann, Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XLII, p. 212.
† *Vide* page 24.

a work written at the end of the 18th century, that we read of *sarkār* "Rangpur and Ghorāghāt." It is therefore difficult to accept a derivation which connects the name with one of the kings of mythology. In the 18th century, Rangpur emerges suddenly as the headquarters of the Mughal administration in Sircar Cooch Behar, but how the town came to assume that name is a matter veiled in mystery. The Muhammadans called their earliest settlement Mahiganj and its suburb Nawābganj. Around these two villages the modern town of Rangpur has grown up. It is impossible to determine now whether the *mauzās* mentioned above took their name from the town or whether the town took its name from them.

There is a Sanscrit *sloka*, well known to the *pandits* of North Bengal, which may be translated as follows :–

I come from a land in which widow and wife
In popular view are but one and the same ;
Where no garment is worn save the *mekhola* gown*
Which is bare above breast, and bare below knee.

It is said that this was the reply given by a prince of Rangpur to a king of Benāres, who asked him for information about his country ; and it has been suggested that Rangpur is derived from *rānga* which means a joke or jest.

A third suggestion is that Rangpur is named from its dyeing industry—*rāng* meaning colour. The manufacturers of jute sacking in the north of the district, at the present day, dye the fabric themselves.

Boundaries. The district is bounded on the north by the Jalpaiguri district and the Cooch Behar State ; on the east by the Brahmaputra river, which separates it from Goālpāra, by the Gāro Hills and Mymensingh ; on the west by the districts of Dinājpur and Jalpaiguri and on the south by the district of Bogra

General configuration. Rangpur is a vast alluvial plain unrelieved by natural elevations of any kind. In the north are high sandy plains of large extent, and along the west is a strip of high land, composed of stiff red clay ; the rest of the district, especially towards the east, is of low level with alternate sandy and earthy soil and it is estimated that more than a third of the total area is inundated during the rains. The general inclination of the surface is from north-west to south-east, as indicated by the flow of the great rivers, the Brahmaputra, Tista, Karatoya and Dharla. Besides these great water-courses, the whole district is traversed by a network of smaller streams and channels connected with one another or with the main rivers. The latter frequently break through their sandy banks and plough new courses for themselves over the fields, and traces of these changes exist in the sandy plains and stagnant pools or marshes which dot the whole face of the

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* Rajbansi women in the district still wear a garment of this description known as "*patāni*."

country. The marshes do not spread into vast expanses as in the lower delta, and their number and position vary considerably in the course of time, the older ones silting up or becoming gradually obliterated by accumulations of decaying vegetation, while new ones are occasionally formed by alterations in the courses of rivers. They are less numerous and smaller in size than before, but are still a serious menace to the public health. On the other hand, agricultural industry takes full advantage of the provision of an abundant water-supply and the generous deposits of silt. Two-thirds of the total area is under continuous cultivation and even the patches of waste land yield a considerable tribute of reed and cane. In shape, the district is roughly an isosceles triangle, of which the western boundary forms the base and the Bramaputra one of the sides. Its greatest length from north-west to south-east—the run of the district—is 96 miles, and its greatest breadth from east to west is 70 mile..

RIVER SYSTEM.

The topography of the district is dominated by its rivers. The Brahmaputra and the Tista exercise an enormous influence by the fertilising effect of their inundations and also by their diluviating action. But these two are the only rivers navigable throughout the year by trading boats of a hundred maunds, that is, from three to four tons' burden and the navigation of the latter river is dangerous in the cold season on account of the shoals and quicksands which form at its confluence with the Brahmaputra. All the rivers of Rangpur and many water-courses are navigable by boats of two tons' burden in the rainy season. The Brahmaputra and Tista are nowhere fordable during the rains.

Owing to the number of the channels, their frequent changes of course, and the varying names of the same stream in different places, it would be hopeless to attempt a detailed description of all the rivers in the district. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, in his manuscript account of Rangpur, written about the year 1809, noticed this fact :—"Since the survey was made by Major Rennell (about thirty years ago)," he writes, "the rivers of this district have undergone such changes that I find the utmost difficulty in tracing them. The soil is so light, and the rivers in descending from the mountains have acquired such force, that frequent and great changes are unavoidable Old channels have been swept away, and new ones are constantly forming. The nomenclature is therefore exceedingly difficult. After tracing the name of a river for some distance, you lose it all of a sudden, and perhaps recover the same name at a distance of twenty miles, while many large rivers intervene, and no channel remains to assist in the discovery of the former connection The old channels have not only lost their current of water, but have been entirely obliterated by cultivation, or by beds of sand thrown into them by newly-formed rivers. In some instances different portions of the same river remain, while others have been lost, and the intervals are filled up by new channels; so that the same river has different

names in different parts of its course. The confusion that has arisen from these circumstances is so great that Major Rennell seems to have been overpowered, or unwilling to waste time in the investigation, and, owing to the contradictory accounts given by the natives, to have altogether avoided giving names to many of the rivers."

The following is a brief description of the principal rivers of Rangpur, with their chief tributaries and offshoots :—

Brahmaputra.

The Brahmaputra (*brāhma*, creator, *pūtra*, son) flows along the eastern boundary of the district, separating it from Goālpāra and Mymensingh. But owing to changes in the course of the river, a tract of alluvial land at Rowmāri which belongs to Rangpur district now lies on the east bank. The Brahmaputra first touches the district in its north-east corner at Majhiāli about eight miles south-east of Dhubri, the headquarters of the Goālpāra district. It then skirts the eastern boundary, flowing almost due south for about eighty miles, till it finally leaves Rangpur at a village called Nālchia, in the extreme south-eastern corner of the district. The Brahmaputra is capable of floating native trading-boats of large burden throughout the year; and the light draught of the river steamers permits them to proceed up and down the river at all seasons. In the rainy months navigation is impeded by the strong current; whilst in the dry season a large number of shoals and sandbanks obstruct the channel. The banks of the river are either abrupt or shelving, according as the current sets from one side of the stream or the other; the bed is sandy. At present the most noticeable features in this great river are the immense number of islands and sandbanks formed by its current, and the constant changes in its course. During the past half century the Brahmaputra has been steadily encroaching on its right bank. In 1873 it was reported that the police station at Chilmāri had been twice removed farther inland within five years and within the last decade the inspection bungalow at that place has had to be withdrawn from the river's reach and is now again threatened. Further south, the old and important river station and mart of Kāliganj has been completely washed away and the same fate has overtaken Bhowāniganj, the former headquarters of the Gaibanda sub-division. In this way many square miles of country between the Brahmaputra and the Tīsta have been swept away by the former river which is still breaking away westward. In the north of the district, on the other hand, the river appears to have receded from the right bank. Bagwa and Jatrāpur, which were formerly river stations on the route to Assam, are no longer accessible to steam-vessels. The principal tributaries of the Brahmaputra on its western bank, within Rangpur district, are the Tīsta, Dharla, Sankos and Dūdhkumar.

Tista.

The Tīsta is the second river in importance. The name is an abbreviation of the Sanscrit *trisrota*, "three currents." The

Kalika Purān thus explains the origin of the name. Pārbati, wife of Siva, was engaged in mortal combat with a demon, who worshipped Siva and refused to worship her. During the fight, the monster prayed to Siva for water to quench his thirst, and the god caused a river to flow from the breasts of Pārbati in three streams. Walter Hamilton* curiously derives the name from *tishta*, "standing still," which is anything but characteristic of the river. It enters Rangpur from Jalpaiguri about a mile north of the village of Chatnai, and runs across the district from north-west to south-east, till it falls into the Brahmaputra near Mohānganj about twelve miles to the south-west of Chilmāri police outpost, forming the boundary between the Kurigrām and Gaibanda sub-divisions of the Rangpur district. By another and older channel it joins the Brahmaputra at Khatiamāri, two miles north of Fulchāri. Its length is estimated at about a hundred and ten miles within the Rangpur district. This river has a fine channel from six to eight hundred yards wide, containing a large volume of water at all times of the year, and a rapid current. Although reported capable of floating large trading boats of a hundred maunds, or between three and four tons' burden, at all seasons, navigation is rendered difficult in the cold weather by shoals and quicksands, which form at its junction with the Brahmaputra The sandbanks formed by its current are fewer in number and of much smaller size than those in the Brahmaputra. The bed of the river is of sand. The lower part of the Tista, from Kapāsia to Nālganjhāt, is also called the Pagla river. The Tīsta is noted for frequent and violent changes in its course; and many old channels are found known as the Chhōta Tīsta, Būri Tista, and Mara Tista, each of which at one time must have formed the main chanel of the river, but which are now deserted, and only navigable in the rainy season. At the time of Major Rennell's survey, the main stream of the Tīsta flowed south instead of south-east as at present, joined the Atrai river in Dinājpur, and finally fell into the Padma or Ganges. In the destructive floods of 1194 B.S., or 1787 A.D., which formed an epoch in the history of Northern and Central Bengal, the stream suddenly forsook its course and, forcing its way through the fields and over the country in every direction, opened out a new channel to the south-east into the Brahmaputra. An account of this inundation and its disastrous effects will be given on a subsequent page, under the natural calamities of the district. But it may be noted here that in 1789, the Government, alarmed at the constant loss of revenue caused by the escapades of the river, directed the Collector to construct works to keep the river in its course. Two lakhs of rupees were sanctioned and 12,000 men employed on the work. But it was very soon found that the Tīsta could not be harnessed and the operations were abandoned

* *Description of Hindustan*, 1820, p. 209

early in the following year. The grand escapade of 1787 was followed by others within comparatively recent memory. Mr. Glazier in his Report on Rangpur, in 1873, stated :—"In the early part of this century, it (the Tīsta) forsook a westward bend of about forty miles in the upper part of its course, to the westward of Dimla, and took a less circuitous bend in the opposite direction. It has since adhered to the course then formed, but with alarming encroachments on its sandy banks in several places. A large mart, Ghorāmāra, on the western bank, has been pushed gradually backward, until not a vestige remains of the village from which it takes its name."* The village of Barūni, which was formerly the headquarters of a police station, has also been completely washed away. The confusion in the nomenclature of the rivers to the west of the district is mainly caused by these frequent changes in the course of the Tīsta.

The Tīsta receives numerous small tributary streams from the north-west, and also throws out many offshoots of more or less importance. The largest of these is the Ghāghāt. There are two branches of the Tīsta, known as the Manās and the Mūra Manās; both rejoin the parent stream after a winding course of about 25 miles. The Gujāria is another important branch of the Tīsta.

Dharla

The Dharla, another tributary of the Brahmaputra, is a branch of the Torsha river from which it bifurcates in Cooch Behar It first touches Rangpur at the village of Durgāpur, where it receives the waters of the Jaldhāka river from Cooch Behar, the united stream running on as the Dharla. For a few miles this river marks the boundary between Rangpur and Cooch Behar. It then turns south and enters the district. After a course of a few miles, it receives the waters of the Torsha, its parent stream, whence it flows in a tortuous south-easterly course till it falls into the Brahmaputra at Dharlamukh. The junction was effected formerly at Bagwa. Some fourteen miles after it enters the district it is joined by a small and winding river known as the Nilkumār. It is remarkable that Dr. Buchanan Hamilton described this river as being wider than the Dharla, whereas it is now a narrow stream which almost dries up in the hot weather It was also then known as the Būra or old Dharla, and was no doubt at one time the main channel. It has gradually silted up since Dr. Hamilton visited the district. During the rains there is a large amount of traffic on this river and boats of 500 maunds burden are able to ascend it as far as Mughalhāt. The principal marts on its banks in the Rangpur district are Mughalhāt, Kulāghat, Bhōgdānga, Kurigrām, Pānchgāchhi, Mughalbāchha, Baksiganj, Bagwāli and Bagwa. Mughalhāt and Mughalbāchha derive their names from circumstances connected

* The mart has also since disappeared.

with the Muhammadan conquest of Bengal. Mughalhāt* was a frontier market and Mughālbachha is said to mean the place where the Mughals escaped or fled, and a local tradition relates that the Muhammadan army having suffered defeat with great loss in its neighbourhood the survivors escaped at this point across the Dharla, which at that time constituted the limit of the Mussalman territories. The bed of the river is sandy, and the current rapid; and numerous shallows and shifting sands render navigation extremely difficult. The banks are low and shelving, and the river is liable to constant changes of course. There seems no doubt that the proper spelling of the name is Dhalla and that the derivation from the Sanscrit *dhavla* or white is correct. Captain Lewin in his account of the Cooch Behar State discredits this origin of the river's name, and it is stated that the word is universally pronounced Dharla. This is certainly not the case in Rangpur where it is generally not only pronounced but written in the vernacular as Dhalla. The river is a perfectly clear one in Rangpur except, of course, in the rains. It is probable, however, that the name refers to the colour of the sand and not of the water. In the dry season the channel is studded with islands of pure white sand and the dry portion of the bed is of the same colour. The whole channel shows at a distance as a white streak stretching across the country and the Sanscrit name appears particularly appropriate. The length of the river in Rangpur district is 55 miles.

Dūdh kumar.

The Dūdhkumar, which is also locally known at some parts of its course as the Sankos, enters the district at Tilai after flowing nearly due south for about fifty miles into the Brahmaputra near Nūnkhewa It is formed by the junction of the Raidhak, the Kaljāni and other small streams from Cooch Behar. The true Sankos, which emerges from the Bhutan hills, is a considerable river and forms the boundary between the districts of Goālpāra and Jalpaiguri It merely touches Rangpur under the name of the Gangādhar, a few miles before it joins the Brahmaputra. The name Dūdhkumar is probably derived from the supposed milky colour of its waters. The termination *kumār*, pronounced *kuar*, is common in the north-east of the district in the names of minor streams and is remarkable for its masculine form, rivers in Bengal being generally named in the feminine gender. Gangādhar is a local corruption of Gadādhar, the name by which the eastern branch of the river in Goālpara is still known and which is its own appellation in Cooch Behar. The chief places on the river are Bhurungamari, Pateswari, Alumjāni, Patāmāri and Mādarganj.

Karatoya.

The Karatoya is the most important river in the west of the district and has a special interest as it formed the boundary

* Walter Hamilton in his *Description of Hindustan*, 1820, p. 210, derives Mughalhāt fro *mangala*, flourishing, and *hāt*, market This is obviously mistake.

between the Bengal and Kamrup kingdoms at the time of the Mahābhārata, and since that epoch has generally marked the eastern limit of the rule of the successive Bengal dynasties. The name is traditionally derived from *kar*, hand, and *toya*, water; the story being that the water poured into Siva's hand at his marriage with Pārbati, became the source of a stream, when it fell on the ground. The numerous changes in the course of the Tīsta have left in the west of the district a maze of old water-courses and stagnant marshes, which render it nearly impossible to trace the course of the former rivers. In many parts of its course the Karatoya is still known as the Būri or old Tīsta; and the broad, sandy channel in many places indicates the route followed by the Tīsta before the great changes caused by the inundation of 1787. Dr. Buchanan, who travelled in these parts in 1809, describes as the upper part of the Karatoya what is now known as the Karta river, which flows from the hills between the Mahānadi and the Tīsta and, passing through the Jalpaiguri district, joins the Atrai in Dinājpur. The river must have been much larger in 1203 A.D., when Bakhtyār Khilji marched along its banks on his invasion of Thibet, for it is said that "he was guided to a country, the town whereof is called Abardhan. Facing that town flows a river which in its depth and breadth is thrice as much as the River Ganges."* The town has been identified by Professor Blochmann as Bardhankote, in Govindganj *thāna*, and the river as the ancient Karatoya. Local tradition and the contour of the country also point to the existence of an immense river between Ghorāghāt and Tulshighāt in Gaibanda sub-division in ancient times. The Karatoya, as now known, takes its rise amongst marshes at the north-west corner of the district, and after forming for some distance the boundary between Rangpur and Dinājpur crosses Govindganj *thāna* into the Bogra and Pabna districts. It finally empties itself into a branch of the Padma in the latter district. It receives from the east two other streams of much greater volume than itself—the Sarbāmangala and Jubaneswari—the latter of which represents the middle, while the Karta stands for the upper course of the ancient Karatoya. There appears to be no doubt that the present Karatoya and Karta though now disconnected were formerly one and the same stream. As late as 1809 the upper stream was known as the Karatoya and Karta is evidently only a modern corruption of that name. It seems probable therefore that the main volume of the united Tīsta and Karta rivers formerly flowed down the present Karatoya and that the diversion of the Karta to the Atrai was due to one of those freaks of its wayward companion, the Tīsta, which have earned for it the name of the Pagla or mad river. The Kātakhāli is a branch that takes off from the Karatoya near Gobindganj and joins the Bangāli river.

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* *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*, translated by Abdus Salam, M.A., 1904. See also *Tabāqat-i-Nasiri*, translated by Raverty, p. 561.

Ghāghāt.

The Ghāghāt flows through the centre of the district. It was formerly an important branch of the Tīsta, and previous to the change in the course of that river at the close of the 18th century was a main channel of communication. Its off-take from the Tīsta at Nahāli, however, has now nearly silted up—a process hastened by the earthquake of 1897—and it has consequently become for the most part of a local drainage channel. It flows in a south-easterly direction, with a very winding channel and a sluggish stream, and passes into Bogra district at Aguntāri after a course of about 114 running miles in Rangpur. Two miles above Rangpur the river bifurcates, one branch flowing through the station, and the other proceeding due south. The two branches reunite four miles south of Rangpur. The former branch, however, has long since ceased to be a living river and is now a stagnant marsh. A canal, five miles long, has been recently excavated near Gaibanda by the Public Works Department connecting the Ghāghāt with the Mūra Manās river mentioned below. The canal affords a fall of twelve feet and has had an appreciable effect in accelerating the current of the Ghāghāt in its upper reaches. In the lower part of its course the Ghāghāt receives the name first of the Alai, and then of the Bangāli river, under which name it joins the Hūra Sāgar river in Pabna district. The places of importance on the river are Bethgāri, Nisbetganj, Jalāiganj, Sadullapur, Gaibanda and Tulsighāt.

Manās.

The Manās is a branch of the Tīsta in Sadr sub-division and runs parallel to it for about 25 miles before it rejoins the parent stream. It appears to have been an independent river, until its channel was usurped by the Tīsta. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton in 1809 mentions the trading centre of Kāhdaha, past which the Tīsta now flows, as being situated on a branch of the Manās. At the present day it is a poor shrunken stream, and the bed has silted to such an extent that portions of it are cultivated during the cold weather. The river is spanned by a railway bridge near Bhutsāra station

Mūra Manās.

The Mūra Manās is another branch of the Tīsta, in Gaibanda sub-division It rejoins the Tīsta shortly before the latter river falls into the Brahmaputra, north of Fulchāri. It has recently been connected by a canal with the Ghāghāt, the main stream of which now discharges itself into the Manās. The most important place on this river is Kāmārjani, a large country-produce mart.

Gujāria

The Gujāria is a considerable channel which separates itself from the Tīsta shortly before that river falls into the Brahmaputra. It flows in a southerly direction for about thirty miles, when it bifurcates, one branch falling into the Brahmaputra, the other, taking a south-westerly course, till it falls into the Bangāli river just south of the point where the latter stream passes from Rangpur into the Bogra district.

Marshes and swamps.

The district contains many swamps and marshes, called *jhīls*, or *bhīls*, whose origin may be traced to the numerous changes which have taken place in the channels of the larger rivers, particularly the Tista. They are gradually becoming shallower and are diminishing both in size and number. Most of them are covered with a thick crust of aquatic vegetation. The decay of these plants together with the deposit of silt washed down from the high lands and the advance of cultivation around their borders gradually fills up these depressions. None of them now is of very great size. The largest, known as the *Bara Bhīl* or great swamp, covers about three square miles. It is situated in Pirganj *thana* and gives its name to a fiscal division. It was formerly probably of much greater area. The Lunipukur *Bhīl*, 8 miles west of Rangpur, and the Tograi *Bhīl*, 6 miles west of Kurigram, are also of considerable extent and in the cold weather afford good duck and snipe shooting. The Kukrul and Chikli *Bhīls* forming the northern boundary of Rangpur town, are now much reduced in area.

Canals

No irrigation canals exist or are needed. But there are two drainage canals, known as Ghose's or Shyamasundari Canal and Skrine's Canal near Rangpur town. The object of the former was to reduce the water level of the Chikli and Kukrul *Bhīls* and to let the surface drainage of the town fall there. Skrine's Canal was an attempt to resuscitate the moribund Ghāghāt by cutting across some of its windings and letting in water from the active stream to the west. Neither object has been achieved. A canal 3 miles long constructed by the Public Works Department in 1907, connecting the Ghāghāt at Godarhāt near Gaibanda with the Mūra Manās at Bagūria has proved a complete success. The work cost only Rs. 9,650 and the results are that the Ghāghāt has received a new lease of life, and the large *bhīl* to the north-east of Gaibanda is thoroughly drained and great part of it made available for cultivation.

GEOLOGY.

The geology of the district presents no features of interest. It is one large alluvial tract consisting of sand and clay brought down by the great Himalayan rivers, especially the Brahmaputra, Tista and Karatoya. The age of these deposits may be determined by the proportion of sand, loam and clay in the soil. In the west and south-west of the district, on the borders of Bogra and Dinājpur, there is an outcrop of stiff reddish clay, locally known as *khiyār*. It is a narrow strip of country about 100 square miles in area, and is evidently a continuation of the *barind* tract in Rājshāhi, Malda and Dinājpur. The soil is strongly impregnated with iron and contains *kankar* or nodules of carbonate of lime; and its characteristics indicate fluviatile deposits of considerable age.* The greater part of the district is composed of more recent alluvium, locally known as *poli* which is a soft sandy loam of great fertility. The *chars* that form along the banks of the

* See article on Alluvial Deposits by W. Theobald, *Records of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. III, p 17.

Brahmaputra and the Tista represent the most recent deposits. Fresh water shells are of more frequent occurrence in the newer than in the older alluvium, the species being those now living in the rivers and marshes of the country.

BOTANY.

From the botanist's point of view, the district is included in the division known as *India dilupa,* and its characteristics may be described as follows:—"South of the sub-montane forests and swamps, and further out into the plain, the ground as a rule rises somewhat, and, if so high as to be free from inundations, is in waste tracts usually covered with open jungle—of a bushy character in the western parts, taller and more park-like in the central districts, and mixed with reedy grass and, sometimes, consisting only of tall grass as we pass to the east. Much of this tract, however, especially in the west, is under cultivation and is then bare, or diversified with bamboos, palms and orchards of mangoes or, less often, groves of other trees. In and about the villages themselves the mangoes are often accompanied by a number of tree-weeds and semi-spontaneous, more or less useful bushes and trees that form characteristic village shrubberies."*

There are no forests now in Rangpur, but thickly wooded tracts remain in various *thānās,* and parts of Nageshwari and Pirganj *thānās* are covered with dense jungle. There are two or three private plantations of *sāl* trees. The district possesses a great variety of trees. The shady banyan (*Ficus indica*) and the stately *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) attain a very great size. Jack trees (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) are numerous and the timber is in great demand for the manufacture of furniture. Planks, 6 feet by 1½ feet, sell at Rs. 12 per pair. The wood takes a very fine polish. Mango wood is not as good, but is often used for the shutters of doors and windows and for ploughs. The *sisoo* (*Dalbergia sissoo*), which, in 1809, Buchanan found only on the borders of Nepal and Bhutan, is now very common in the district. The timber is of excellent quality and is much used for furniture, rafters, beams and door-frames. A large tree fetches as much as Rs. 80 and is sufficient for building a house of ordinary size. The *karai* or *tārul* tree (*Albizzia procera*) has a very hard wood which is principally used for constructing the frame-work of corrugated iron roofs. A big tree sells for about Rs 20. The *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) grown in the district is inferior to the hill tree. It is used for the posts and frame-work of houses and for building boats and cart wheels. The *bābul* (*Acacia arabica*) is found all over the district but does not reach a great size. The wood is hard and durable and is largely utilised in making cart wheels (especially the hub) and ploughs. The *jārul* (*Lagerstræmia Flos-Reginæ*), ar myrtle, is much sought after for boat building, and the *jām*, anothe myrtle (*Eugenia Jambolana*), is largely used for cheap furniture and boxes. The *simul* or Indian cotton tree (*Bombax mala-*

* D. Prain, *Bengal Plants*, Vol. I, p. 9.

baruceum) is common in Rangpur. Some fishermen use it for making canoes; they are easily wrought and remarkably buoyant, but they do not last more than a year, as the wood cannot stand exposure to sun or rain. Among other timber trees may be mentioned the *haritāki* (*Myrobalanus chebula*), the *bākul* (*Mimusops Elengi*) and the *raktachandan* (*Adenanthera pavonina*). The *jiga* or *jeul* (*Odina wodier*, Roxb.) is a tree of rapid growth and is much used for hedges and boundary fences.

The trees of the genus *Citrus* are usually called *jamir* or *nebu* in Rangpur. The *nīm* (*Melia azadirachta*) which is found in most parts of Bengal, is rarely met with, but the *gora nim* (*Melia azadirach*) is common. It is a very ornamental tree and its odorous and elegant flowers are presented in offering to the gods. The *tezpāt* (*Laurus cassia*) is cultivated on account of its aromatic leaves, which are in great demand throughout Bengal as a seasoning for food. The leaves are gathered once a year in spring, exposed for about fifteen days to the sun and collected in heaps at night, but not removed from the dew. They are then made into neat bales and covered with sackcloth. Foremost among ornamental trees are the *nageswar* (*Mesua ferrea*), the *hijal* (*Barringtonia acutangula*) and the *sonali* or Indian laburnum. In Dr. Buchanan's time there was almost a forest of handsome *hijal* trees in the south-east of the district. The *champa* (*Michelia magnolia*) is a favourite tree in gardens and about villages on account of its sweet-smelling flowers. The *dangkari* is a vervain and its leaves are used as a medicine for cattle. The *rudrakhi* belongs to the family of *Tiliaciæ*. The fruit which is of a fine deep-blue colour is not edible; the stone, which is globular, is deeply wrinkled as if cut by hand and is used for beads. The tamarind tree is now found all over the district. A species of tamarix locally known as *jhau* is common, and the same name is applied to the Casuarina trees introduced by European residents. Among other exotics, of which a few specimens exist, are teak, mahogany and the rain-tree.

Many varieties of palms are found in the district, the chief being the *gua* (*Areca catechu*) or the betel-nut palm, the *nariket* or cocoanut palm grown in the south, and the the *khejūr* or date-palm, the cultivation of which is greatly neglected. There are several kinds of dwarf-palms which grow wild in the wooded parts of the district. The principal varieties of the bamboo are the *bara bāns* (large), the *talla bāns* which makes good fishing rods, the *beru bāns*, a prickly plant fit only for fuel, and the *makla bāns* used largely for house-walls, mats and fences. The canes of the district are of inferior quality. The reeds are of more importance and the *bara khagra* found in the *chars* of Nageshwari *thana* are often higher than the head of a man when riding on an elephant. The *nāl* reed grows to the size of a bamboo and is split and made up into mats. The young leaves of all varieties of

reeds make very good fodder for cattle and buffaloes. The only reed, however, that yields a revenue to the *zamindār* is *ulu* or thatching grass. The tenants are usually allowed to cut the other reeds without any payment, but strangers pay a trifling sum for each sickle or person employed. The *bhīls* and marshes in the district are usually covered with a variety of aquatic vegetation including the *Valisneria spiralis*, *Serpicula verticillata*, the *padma* a species of *Nelumbium*, and the *kakta kombal* (*Nymphea lotus*). In the rains a species of *Andropogon* (spear-grass) locally known as *chor kanta* grows abundantly on every open space and on roads and pathways to the great discomfort of pedestrians. *Bhāng* or wild hemp (*Canabis sativa*) grows as a roadside weed. In the woods, giant creepers of the thickness of cables are often found and generally the vegetation is that of a moist sub-tropical climate.

FAUNA.
Mammals.

Fifty years ago Rangpur abounded in wild animals. Tigers had their haunts all over the district, elephants were trapped or noosed and wild buffaloes were hunted with spears and poisoned arrows. But the advance of civilisation, the spread of human habitations and the destruction of jungle have compelled their retirement to more secure abodes in the forests of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Goālpāra. Occasionally a tiger descends from his fastness in the Cooch Behar jungles to prey on the wild pig which abound on the *chars* of the Brahmaputra valley. One was shot in 1908, and a couple with two cubs in 1909, near Bhurūngamāri, on the Cooch Behar frontier. In 1909 a rogue elephant was reported to have made a raid across the northern frontier and killed several persons. Among large carnivora the leopard is the only one that is common. It works havoc among goats and cattle and frequently attacks men. Several kinds of wild cats, including the Indian civet, are known. They are very destructive to small game, and, when near human dwellings, to goats and poultry.

Jackals hang about the villages in large numbers. They are extremely daring and not a few cases are reported every year of their carrying away little children Wild pig are quite common, especially in the *char* lands, and cause much damage to the crops. They invade the fields at night in large numbers and are not easily scared away During the rains, when the *chars* are inundated they seek shelter in village jungle and are hunted down by the villagers or their paid *shikāris*, and occasionally caught with nets. Cases of men being killed by boars are not unknown and, in certain places, villagers will not venture out at night without weapons of defence. The Indian fox, several species of the mongoose family and hares are found all over the district. Porpoises are numerous in the Brahmaputra. Bears and deer, which were once common, are no longer met with, and monkeys and porcupines are rare. Squirrels, mice and rats represent the rodent tribe.

Birds.

The district has a great variety of birds. The *bhils* and marshes are tenanted by a large aquatic population, including rails, coots, water-hens, storks, herons, cranes, cormorants, divers, dabchicks, waders, gulls, terns and paddy-birds. The *kaim* or purple coot (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*) destroys large quantities of paddy. In the cold weather great flights of duck and teal visit the district. The most ordinary varieties are common teal, whistling teal, blue-winged teal, common wild duck, widgeon, gadwall, white-eyed pochard and shovellers; pintail, red-headed pochard and crested pochard are rare. Geese (grey and bar-headed) and the Brahmani duck (ruddy sheldrake) are frequently seen on the banks of the Tista, Dharla and Brahmaputra. Snipe, of the common, painted and jack species, are fairly numerous and there are many varieties of sand pipers, stints and snippets. Black partridge and quail (button and rain) are met with in the north of the district but are not as common as formerly. Plover of the golden and grey varieties are found all over the district and ortolans are netted in large numbers. Jungle fowl and florican are now very seldom met with.

Among the larger birds of the district the splendid white-tailed eagle may often be seen perched on a dead tree ready to pounce on an unwary fish or eel. There are several varieties of vultures and owls, and kites, hawks, buzzards and shrikes take their toll of the smaller birds all over the district. The common and the carrion crow are seen everywhere.

The golden oriole adds a brilliant touch of colour to the sombre mango groves and the bamboo plantations are the home of numberless doves, finches, warblers and tits. Bulbuls enliven the low thickets with their typical music and the sociable thrushes and their allies frequent the gardens in large numbers; while the palm trees are often covered with the hanging nests of the weaver bird (*Ploceus baya*). The green and red-headed parrakeets commit great havoc in the fruit gardens and maize fields. Swallows and martins are everywhere on the wing and the banks of the rivers are honeycombed with the tunnelled dwellings of the sand-martin. The rollers are well in evidence—the gorgeous Indian-roller (*Calacias indica*) being their most conspicuous representative. The Indian spotted wood-pecker (*Picus macei*) and the common green barbet are frequently seen and the voice of the cuckoo (*koil*) and the Indian mocking-bird (*kokil*) is frequently heard in the hot weather, though the birds themves are not often visible. The white and the grey-and-yellow wagtails herald the approach of the cold weather and the chestnut-bellied *munias* (*Munia rubronigra*) are frequently seen in large numbers in the paddy stubble. Sand-larks, wood and bush larks and the common sparrow are numerous. The beautiful paradise fly-catcher may be seen occasionally darting along the tops of the trees with his tail streaming in the air and

the exquisite hoopoe is an occasional visitor in gardens and open spaces. Almost all the families of Indian birds are represented in the district in places suited to each particular variety; but their number tends to decline owing to the extent to which deforestation has been carried on.

Reptiles. Reptiles are abundant in Rangpur district. The common cobra and the *krait* (*Bungarus caeruleus*) are the chief venomous varieties of snake and are the cause of frequent fatalities when the inundations compel them to seek refuge in the higher lands. The most important of the non-venomous snakes is the python (*bora*) of which species the largest is the *chandra bora*. Crocodiles of two kinds are found in the larger rivers, *viz*, the *gharial* (*Crocodilus gangeticus*) which is purely a fish-eater and the *bāucha* which attacks men and cattle. The latter usually frequents ponds and marshes and retires to the rivers only in the dry season. Turtles and tortoises abound in the rivers and there is a special caste, the Ganrāis, who make a profession of catching them. They are much used in the diet of some of the lower castes. Lizards are seen everywhere and include the common monitor (*gui sāmp*) the gecko and the blood-sucker.

Fish. The usual varieties of fish found in the plains districts of the Province are well represented. Several species of the carp are found, the most prized being the *ruhit* or *rui*, *katāl*, *margal*, *chandi*, *chela*, and *puti*. Among varieties with smooth and lubricous skins are the *air*, *bagair* (spotted *air*), *pangash*, *bāccha*, *rīta* (a diminutive *air*), and the *tengra*—all members of the *Pimelodus* species; and the *boāli*, *pabda*, and *singi* of the *Silurus* species. Among other well known varieties are the *ilishā* or *hilsa* (*Clupanodon hilisha*)—occasionally caught in the Brahmaputra and Tista—the *bain* (eel), the *koi* (*Coius cobojus*) greatly esteemed for its delicate flavour, the *chital*, *sail*, *gāzal*, *gharua*, *batāshi*, *cheng* (*Opiocephalus gachua*), *khalisha*, *māgur*, and the *chingri* or prawn.

CLIMATE. The district of Rangpur lies just above the northern tropic and its climate is that of a sub-tropical country, with special characteristics derived from its physical conformation, the proximity of the Himalayas and the Gāro Hills, and the monsoon rainfall. The district is a vast alluvial plain well watered by rivers and generally covered with vegetation, and the soil in most places is a loam. None of the conditions that give rise to rapid and marked variations of temperature, daily or seasonal, are present. On the other hand, the existence of numerous swamps and marshes and the absorbent properties of the soil lead to the accumulation of much water. The percentage of humidity stands at a high figure long after the rains have ceased, and jungle growth is rank and luxuriant throughout the year. Heavy dews and mist are experienced in the cold weather. The north-east winds from the Himalayas set in immediately after the rains and the

district is decidedly cooler than most Bengal districts, the thermometer in the hottest months rarely standing at more than 90°. In the cold weather hoar-frosts are sometimes observed. At this season of the year the atmosphere becomes comparatively clear and dry, and occasionally a view of the mountain peaks is obtained. The rains commence early, at the close of May or the beginning of June. The monsoon current, as it approaches the northern districts of Bengal, is diverted westwards by the Himalayas and an increased ascensional movement is imparted to it. It is the latter circumstance that accounts for the liberal rainfall of the district. Kurigrām sub-division, in addition, receives a considerable share of the precipitations caused by the Gāro Hills. The characteristic features of the climate of the district are thus a mild and equable temperature, a high humidity and a plentiful rainfall.

December, January and February are usually cold and dry but the mornings and evenings are misty. Ordinarily there are only one or two wet days during this period. A few showers are usually obtained about Christmas, and this probably accounts for the average humidity of the atmosphere in January being as great as in any other month of the year. March and April are the hot months, but storms and showers often help to temper the heat. The west winds blowing across the parched plains of Dinājpur make March the least humid month of the year. May is a period of transition. June, July, August and September are the months of rain, every other day being wet. The weather is most steamy and relaxing in August. October and November are transition months: the rains come to an end, the winds veer to the north and the temperature and humidity decrease rapidly.

Temperature.

The average maximum temperature is lowest in January when it is 74·5° and highest in April when it is 91·4°, giving a variation of less than 17°. The variation in average minimum temperature, however, is much greater rising from 49·3° in January to 78·2° in July, that is, by 29°. The moderating influence of cool breezes from the mountains and from the Bay of Bengal keeps the changes of day temperature within narrower limits. The mean temperature rises steadily month by month from January when it is 61·9° to July when it is 89·8°, after which it begins to decline again. The daily range of temperature, as given by the difference between the average maximum and average minimum temperature, of every month, is during the monsoon months, about 12°, but it expands rapidly from October to February when it reaches 26·8°, which is its maximum. The highest temperature recorded at Rangpur is 106·2° in 1903, and the lowest 39·5° in 1909, giving a total range of 66·7°.

Humidity.

The humidity of the atmosphere is lowest in March (75 per cent) and April (80 per cent). After this there is a gradual

increase, but although cloud is thickest and rainfall heaviest in June, the maximum is not reached till September when the saturation amounts to 91 per cent. The same figure, however, is reached again in January This is probably due to the cloudy weather and rain experienced at the beginning of that month or the end of the preceding month. During the monsoon period the humidity is always a degree above or below 90°.

Winds.

From October to May the prevailing wind direction is north-east or east. On the same day, frequently, the wind will blow from the north in the early morning and throughout the forenoon, and veer to the east in the afternoon. The more rapid radiation of heat in the dry and sandy areas to the west of Rangpur induces a westward current as the afternoon advances and the temperature rises During the monsoon months the wind blows consistently from the east or south-east and the atmosphere receives a sudden accession of moisture in June which is maintained throughout the season. Hot and dry west winds occasionally blow, for spells of a few days, during the months of February, March and April. Storms are frequent in the months of April and May though they are rarely so violent as to cause serious damage. They are not infrequently accompanied by showers of hail-stones, often of large size. The district is not ordinarily liable to cyclones, probably on account of its distance from the sea. The only occasion of which any record exists is the destructive cyclone of 1788 of which an account is given in a succeeding chapter.

Rainfall.

The average annual rainfall of the district for the decade ending 1901-02 is 78·8 inches. It appears to have been heavier in former years, as the average for the 25 years preceding the year 1901-02 was calculated at 83·3 inches; and the downward tendency is still in progress as the average for the quinquennium ending in 1908-09 is 76·7 inches. The decrease is probably due to the deforestation of the district. There being no marked differences of elevation, the distribution of rainfall at all seasons of the year is remarkably even; but the areas which lie nearest to the Himalayas and the Gāro Hills register decidedly more rain than those which are more remote. Thus the averages for Nilphamāri and Kurigrām stations are 90 and 88 inches respectively, while Pīrganj and Govindganj receive only 67 inches of rain each. The maximum recorded fall in any one year is 115·79 inches in 1890 and the minimum 56·66 inches in 1907-08. In the latter year there was a partial failure of crops. A serious shortage of rainfall, however, is of very rare occurrence.

The average monthly rainfall from December to January is a third of an inch. In the three following months there is a progressive increase, these early showers being known as the *chhōta barsāt* or small rains which herald the approach of the greater rains. The monsoon bursts over the district in June when the highest fall, *viz.*, 17 inches, is obtained. This standard is not

maintained in the succeeding months, July yielding 14·8, August 12·58 and September 14·09 inches. The rainfall in October and November amounts to only 4·81 inches.

The statistics of rainfall registered at the recording stations in the district are tabulated below for the different seasons, *viz.*, the cold weather (December to February), the hot weather (March to May), the rainy season (June to September) and the autumn (October and December) These figures are the recorded averages, above and below which there are considerable variations from year to year ; thus the average rainfall of the district was 74·93 inches in 1904-05, 84·11 inches in 1905-06, and 92·89 in 1906-07.

Station.	December to February.	March to May	June to September.	October and Novemb r	Annual average.
Rangpur ...	1·00	14·69	63 08	5 18	83 95
Pirganj ...	1·07	9·76	53 28	3 28	67 39
Nilphamâri ...	1·19	14 11	70 59	4 19	90·08
Kurigrâm ...	1 06	19·43	63 50	4·69	88 68
Ulipur ...	0 81	19 23	55·73	4 49	80·26
Gaibanda ..	1·16	13 54	52 44	5 29	72 43
Gobindganj	0 95	10 21	51 60	5 10	67·86
Sunderganj ..	0 89	14 48	58·04	6 31	79 72
Average ...	1·01	14 43	58 53	4 81	78·78

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

EARLY HISTORY.

Rangpur was originally included, together with Assam, Manipur, Jaintia, Cachār and parts of Mymensingh and Sylhet, in the kingdom of Kamrup or Prāgjyotisha, the Karatoya river forming the boundary between that dominion and Matsya or Bengal. One of its earliest rulers, Raja Bhagadatta espoused the side of Dhārjyudān, in the war of the Mahābhārata and was slain by Arjūn. The name of Rangpur is alleged to be connected with the fact that this monarch possessed a country residence on the banks of the Ghāghāt, Rangpur being explained as equivalent to *ranga-pur*, the "place of pleasure" or the "city of delights." There is another Rangpur to the south of Sibsagar, in Assam, which also lays claim to this distinction. *Pargana* Pairaband, which lies south and west from the Ghāghāt, a few miles only from Rangpur town, is said to be named after Pairavati, a daughter of Bhagadatta, who held it as an appanage. According to the authority of the *Ain-i-Akbāri*, Bhagadatta had twenty-three successors in his dynasty; and the *Yagīni Tāntra* gives some very misty accounts of subsequent kings. Among them is Jalpeshwar, who built the temple of Siva at Jalpesh, in Jalpaiguri district. But putting aside these legends, which have little foundation except in the fancy of the annalist, we have genuine local traditions of three dynasties that reigned in this part of Bengal previous to the close of the fifteenth century.

HINDU PERIOD.

Of the earliest line of kings, there are traces only of one Prithu Raja, the ruins of whose capital lie half in *chakla* Boda and half in *pargana* Baikuntpur, in the present district of Jalpaiguri. The city consisted of four enclosures, one within the other, the innermost containing the Raja's palace. Both the inner and middle cities were sub-divided by ramparts and ditches, dividing each city into several quarters. The outermost city of all was tenanted by the lowest classes of the people. The place was strongly fortified for the times in which it was built. The defences were lofty earthen ramparts, with wide moats on the outer sides; and advantage was taken of a small river, the Talma, to form a deep fosse under the embankment, between the middle and outer cities. In some places the earthen defences were faced with brick and surmounted by brick walls. The Raja's house had also a wall round it. The only remains left are portions of the ramparts and heaps of bricks in various places. This Prithu Raja met a tragic fate He was attacked by the impure tribe of *Kichaks*, and, afraid of having his purity sullied by contact with

them, he jumped into a large tank near his palace, whither he was followed by his guards, and the town was given up to plunder. The place is supposed to be still occupied by his spirit; and when Buchanan Hamilton visited it, a flag was raised between the tank and the palace, which was overgrown with jungle, to indicate that the spot was holy, and the guides bowed low and called upon Mahāraja Prithu by name

The Pāl kings.

The next dynasty is that of the Pāls, of which we have notices of four kings, Dharma Pāl being the first. There seems reason to believe that he was descended from or connected with the Pāl princes, who preceded the Vaidya dynasty in Bengal, and reigned in parts of Dinājpur and Bogra. One of this family was reigning in Kamrup, in Assam, in A.D 1175. A few miles south of Dimla are the remains of a fortified city, which still retains the name of Dharma Pāl. An image found in this city contains the typical Pāl emblem of an elephant borne down by a lion. The city is in the form of an irregular parallelogram, rather less than a mile from north to south, and three-quarters of a mile from east to west in the centre, diminishing towards the north and increasing in breadth towards its southern extremity. It consisted of an inner and an outer city, with raised ramparts of earth and ditches on the outer sides Dharma Pāl's domain was probably much more extensive than the present district of Rangpur and included the greater part if not the whole of it. In Buchanan's time tradition pointed to a house at Wari, 5 miles east of Ulipur, near the Brahmaputra, as that of his successor Gopi Chandra; at the present day only a wall 2 feet high and 2 feet wide remains. The remains of the palace of Gopi's son, Bhava Chandra, may still be seen at Udaipur, in *pargana* Baghdwār, far to south.

Dharma Pal appears to have been overthrown by a small neighbouring chief, Manik Chandra by name. Dr. Grierson argues that the conqueror did not belong to the Pal family as the name Chandra does not appear among the titles of known Pal kings. The ballad known as "Manik Chandra's song," which Dr. Grierson* styles the "Epic of Rangpur," is still sung by Jogi minstrels in the district and has made its way to remote parts of India. According to the ballad, Manik Chandra's wife Mayana was deeply skilled in magic—an art in those days lawful for a woman, though not for a man. Her chaplain and instructor Hādi Siddha was a Jogi and a wizard of the first order His mere word could strike one dead. The Jogis, who professed a faith compounded of Buddhism and the Mahābhārata, were probably the priesthood of that age and Mayana was apparently a convert to their creed. Manik Chandra appears to have ruled with vigour and success until he engaged a Bengali Dewan. The Rangpuri peasantry detested the people of the *dakshin desh*, that is, Lower Bengal. The Dewan immediately doubled the ancient land tax of

The song of Manik Chandra.

30 cowries per mensem on every plough (equivalent to four annas and six pies per annum per acre). There was a rising of the peasants which terminated in Manik Chandra's death. Mayana became *sati* for her dead husband but the flames refused to touch her. Eighteen months after, she gave birth to a posthumous son, Gopi Chandra. The gods had decreed this period of gestation, for Manik Chandra's heir was to be a man of perfect vigour and virtue. Gopi Chandra is the real hero of the poem Mayana married him to the two daughters of Raja Haris Chandra, Aduna and Paduna. A hundred maid-servants came with them A mound of earth and two stone slabs in the village of Charchara, east of Ramganj, mark the site of Haris Chandra's *pāt* (palace). In his eighteenth year Gopi Chandra was still childless and it had been foretold to Mayana that at that age he would die unless he became a Sanyasi. She, therefore, persuaded him to go forth into the forests as an ascetic, accompanied by Hadi Siddha. His two wives tried in vain to persuade him to stay, and their arguments* form in Dr. Grierson's opinion the best part of the poem. He yielded, however, to the extent of making his mother go through the ordeal of boiling oil before starting on his travels. This she did, of course, with the greatest ease. Gopi Chandra passed through many trials. In an evil moment, he promised to give the Hadi twelve cowries wherewith to buy *ganja*, but being unable to produce the money and determined to keep his word, he pawned himself to Hira, the harlot, for a period of twelve years. Hira fell in love with him but was repulsed. In revenge she made him perform the meanest and vilest offices of her household and continually ill-used and beat him Finally, he was redeemed by Hādi Siddha, who punished Hira and her maid-servant The former was cut into two, her upper half becoming a bat and her lower half a minnow. The maid-servant was condemned in her old age to marry a peon who would beat her every day of her life. On his return Gopi Chandra again mounted the throne and made his subjects happy by restoring the thirty cowrie assessment. The ballad mentions Patikanagar as Gopi's capital. This has been identified † as the hamlet of Patkapara (literally, "hamlet of bricks"), which lies 2 miles west of Dharma Pal's city. A poem called *Sibargit*, sung by Jogi minstrels, recounting the lamentations, at his departure, of Gopi's hundred wives—probably an improvement on the hundred maid-servants—was said to be popular in Kamrup at the beginning of this century

Gopi's son Bhava Chandra succeeded him. He is also called Udai Chandra, whence the name of his city, Udaipur, the ruins of which are now buried in almost impenetrable jungle. Dr. Buchanan saw large ruins and "lines indicating streets or lanes between gardens." At the present day two long rows of tanks on either side

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* *A metrical version of the Queen's prayer is given in the Appendix*

† *Babu Bisveswar Bhattacharji in the J. A. S. B., Vol. VI, March 1910.*

of a road may be seen. Raja Bhava Chandra and his *mantri* or minister are the heroes of the Hindu nursery version of the wise men of Gotham, and are renowned far and wide throughout Bengal. They were bereft of common sense by the curse of the Raja's favourite goddess, whom he offended by visiting her temple at a forbidden time. They did nothing like other people, slept by day, and kept awake throughout the night. The *mantri* took up his abode in a box, and only emerged from his retreat when called upon by the Raja to deliberate with him on some difficult question. Their executive decisions and acts are still remembered by the people. In the plenitude of their wisdom, they once sentenced the potters to compensate some merchants for loss by wreck, on the ground that the high mounds raised by the former collected the clouds which caused the storm. On another occasion, a fine wild hog was brought to them, that they might decide what strange animal it might be; and after deep cogitation on the knotty point, they concluded that it must either be an overgrown rat or an elephant gone into a consumption. But their last judgment gives the climax to their fame. Two travellers were found one afternoon digging a cooking-place in the ground by the side of a tank for the preparation of their evening meal The Raja, who discovered them, at once recognised a design to effect a burglarious entry in order to steal the tank, and he sentenced them to be impaled as robbers. The wretched men, as a last resource in their despair, had recourse to a singular strategem. They began to make seemingly frantic endeavours to be impaled on the taller of the two poles; and when the Raja inquired the reason of this extraordinary rivalry, they informed him that they had learned, by the power of their enchantments, that whoever was impaled on the higher pole would in the next birth become the sovereign of the whole world, while the other would be his minister. Bhava Chandra eagerly credited their statement and, as the story relates, thinking that it would be far from proper that such low people should acquire supreme dignity, forthwith had himself impaled on the coveted pole, whilst his faithful *mantri* followed his master and expired on the shorter one. Bhava Chandra's successor, Pāla, was the last of the line.

The Khen kings

A state of anarchy followed, Kamrup being overrun by rude tribes, the Koch, Mech, Gāro, Bhōt, Lepcha and others Finally a new dynasty—that of the Khen kings—came to the front. Their origin is uncertain but we have authentic details about three of them, *viz.*, Nīladwāj, Chakradwāj and Nilāmbar. The first founded Kamātapur, the ruins of which are situated in Cooch Behar territory, on the eastern bank of the Dharla river The city was very extensive, and is prominently shown as Comotay in Blaev's map, 1645 A.D. Buchanan Hamilton found it to be nineteen miles in circumference, five of which were defended by the Dharla, and the rest by a rampart and ditch. It presents the

features common to all old cities in this part of Bengal—enclosure within enclosure, wall within wall, the king's palace occupying the centre of the whole. The third king of this dynasty, Nilāmbar, attained to great power. His dominions included the greater part of Kamrup, the whole of Rangpur as far as Ghorāghāt to the south, where he built a fort, and part of *Matsya desh* or Eastern Bengal Muhammadan historians sometimes use Kamrup and Kamāta as synonymous terms.* The struggles of the Afghan kings of Bengal to retain their independence of the Delhi emperors must have afforded an opportunity to this energetic prince to extend his dominions at their expense He laid out a magnificent road from Kamātapur to Ghorāghāt, much of which is still in good preservation, and forms part of the main road between Cooch Behar, Rangpur, and Bogra. Several isolated forts scattered over the district bear his name The fall of this monarch is attributed to the vengeance of his prime minister, a Brāhman named Sochi Patra, on account of an act of inhuman tyranny. The Raja had caused the minister's son to be executed for some misconduct, and he contrived that part of his flesh should be cooked and that the father should partake of it. The Brāhman fled to the court of the Afghan kings at Gaur, and there brought about the first invasion of Rangpur by the Muhammadans under Husain Shāh. The siege of Kamātapur was very protracted and the city was at last taken in 1498 A.D. only by stratagem. The Musalman commander gave out that he despaired of taking it, and proposed a peace. He asked and obtained permission for his ladies to go and pay their respects to the Hindu queen; but their places in the litters were taken by armed men who captured the town. Nilāmbar was taken prisoner, and put into an iron cage to be carried to Gaur; but he escaped on the way, and has ever since remained concealed. Buchanan Hamilton says that the people of Kamrup look for his restoration, when the usurpers, Bhutias, Assamese, Kochs, and Yavānas (western barbarians), shall be driven out of the land.

MUHAMMADAN PERIOD.

The earliest record of a Muhammadan advance east of the Karatoya relates to the invasion in 1203 A.D. of Bakhtyār Khilji, the Afghan general, who, after overthrowing the last Sen king of Bengal, sought fresh laurels in the unknown regions of the north. The *Tabāqat-i-Nasiri* written in 1260 A.D. gives the following account of his expedition †:—A Mech chief, it is said, agreed to conduct Bakhtyār into the hills east of Lakhanwati, and brought him to the city of Bardhankote, in front of which flowed a river of vast magnitude named there "Bagmati" and lower down "Sumrūd" or the ocean, which in breadth and depth was ten times greater than the Ganges. This was probably the old Karatoya river. From here the combined Moslem and Mech

* For example in the *Ain-i-Akbari* and the *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*.

† Raverty's translation, Vol. 1, p. 561.

forces moved northwards along the river till they came to an ancient bridge of hewn stone, resting on twenty-nine arches, by which the river was crossed. For sixteen days Bakhtyār's army marched through a mountainous region and finally came upon an open country, rich and well populated Here he was met and repulsed by an army of Mongol horsemen and obliged to fall back. The retreat was disastrous; the bridge of hewn rock had been destroyed in his rear, and the Raja of Kamrup opposed him with an enormous force. Only Bakhtyār and a few hundred horsemen succeeded in cutting their way through It is said in the *Tārikh-i-Firishtah** that Bakhtyār founded the town of Rangpur on the frontier of Bengal, but this is probably only conjecture. Bakhtyār's expedition was merely a raid and an unsuccessful one at that; he was not in a position to establish a town and it is unlikely that he would name it Rangpur.

This expedition was followed by several others of which we possess very scanty accounts, until we come to Shāh Ismail Ghāzi whose memory is preserved at four *dargas* or shrines in *thāna* Pirganj. The principal one is at Kānta Duar or Chatra Hāt, and the *fakīr* in charge possesses a Persian manuscript † which professes to have been written in 1633 A.D. According to this document, Ismail was an Arab by birth and came to Gaur in the reign of Barbak Shāh. He was sent at the head of an army against Kameswar, king of Kamrup, and after performing feats of supernatural valour succeeded in obtaining his submission to Muhammadan power. The Hindu Governor of Ghorāghāt, becoming envious of his fame, falsely charged him with a treacherous intrigue with the king of Kamrup and Ismail was beheaded in 1474 A.D. His head is said to be buried at Kānta Duar and his body at Madāran in Jahānabad, west of Hugli. Ismail Ghāzi appears to have been a missionary of the militant type and when Dr. Buchanan visited the district there were some traditions of his cruel treatment of the conquered people and their forcible conversion. He is said to have issued three commands to the *zamindārs* of Pirganj, *viz.*, that no one should sleep on a bedstead, that the *zamindārs* should not oppress the tenants, and that milk should not be mixed with water. At the present day Ismail Ghāzi is regarded as a *pīr* and his memory is venerated by Hindus and Muhammadans alike. It is probable that his operations paved the way for the successful campaign of Husain Shāh which brought about the downfall of Nilāmbar, the last Khen king. This has been described above. Husain Shāh appears to have been a wise and benevolent monarch, and he is the only king whose name is still remembered among the common people. He celebrated the conquest of Kamātapur by erecting a *madrasa* at

* *Apud* Blochmann in the J. A S. B., Vol. XLII. foot-note p. 212.

† G H. Demant, *Notes on Shāh Ismail Ghāzi*, J.A.S.B., 1874, Vol. 43, p. 215.

Gaur, the inscription on which is dated 1501-02 A.D. There is an account of a later expedition into Assam which ended disastrously. This probably weakened the hold of the Muhammadans on a great part of the country that they had occupied, and enabled a new dynasty to rise on the ruins of the Kamāta kingdom. For, subsequently, the northern boundary of the Muhammadan possessions appears to be a line drawn from the Karatoya on the west, crossing the Ghāghāt and Tīsta midway, and extending to the Brahmaputra on the east, including Pairaband and other *parganas* comprised in *sarkār* Ghorāghāt.

The Koch Kings

Among the wild tribes of the eastern frontier that had overrun Assam and driven back the Afghan Husain Shāh, the Koches were the most powerful. The progenitor of the Koch kings was a Mech or Koch—it is not certain which—named Haria Mandal. He married, it is said, two sisters named Hira and Jira, by whom he had two sons, Bisu, the son of Hira, and Sisu, the son of Jira. They were born some years before the conquest of Kamāta by the Muhammadans under Husain Shāh. Bisu was a man of unusual enterprise and courage, and succeeded in uniting under his rule the petty principalities which arose on the retirement of Husain Shāh. He built a fine city at Cooch Behar and his kingdom extended to the Karatoya on the west and the Bār Nadi on the east. As usual in such cases, the Brāhmans soon found him out and discovered that he was of divine origin and that his tribesmen were descendants of the Kshatriyas, who had fled before the wrath of Parasuram. Bisu assumed the name of Bisva Singh and became a great patron of Hinduism; and many of his followers discarded their old tribal designation and called themselves Rājbanshis—literally, of the royal kindred. Bisva Singh died about 1540 and was succeeded by his son Malla Dev, who assumed the name of Nar Nārāyan. During his reign, and owing mainly to the ability of his brother and general Sukhladwāj, better known as Silarai or the Kite king, the neighbouring tribes including the Ahoms and Kachāris, and the Rajas of Manipur, Jaintia, Tippera and Sylhet, were overcome and made tributary. But about 1560 A.D they came in conflict with a stronger enemy, the "Pasha of Gaur." Nar Nārāyan was badly beaten and Silarai was captured and taken to Gaur. In 1578 A.D., according to the *Ain-i-Akbāri*, Nar Nārāyan became tributary to the Mughal Emperor. This king died in 1584, and according to an arrangement effected in his lifetime, the portion of his kingdom lying west of the Sankos, which included Cooch Behar and parts of Dinājpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur, fell to the share of his son Lakshmi Nārāyan; while the portion lying east of the Sankos and on both banks of the Brahmaputra, which included Bāharband and Bhitarband, was given to Silarai's son Raghu Deb. Muhammadan writers refer to the two kingdoms as "Koch Bihar" and "Koch Hājo" respectively. The cousins did not agree and

when Raghu Deb was succeeded by the son Parikshit there was a short war between the two Koch kingdoms. Lakshmi Nārāyan in 1526 declared himself a vassal of the Mughal Empire and invited the intervention of the Muhammadan Governor of Bengal.*

The Muhammadans were not slow to avail themselves of this opportunity. Koch Hājo was invaded and Parikshit defeated and captured, and his dominions annexed in 1612 A.D. In 1662, however, Mir Jumla the Mughal General, met with defeat in attempting to penetrate into Assam and had to retire from much of the territory previously occupied. The Muhammadans retained the *sarkār* of Bangalbhum, which comprised Bāharband and Bhitarband, and portions of two other *sarkārs*, *viz.*, Goālbāri in Uttarkūl *sarkār*, and Goālpāra and Rangāmati in Dakhinkūl *sarkār*. A Muhammadan officer was stationed at Rangāmati, who was instructed to encourage the growth of forests and jungle, in order that the fierce Assamese might not penetrate farther to the west and south. A portion of the territory abandoned by the Muhammadans reverted to Parikshit's descendants, and is known in our old records as the State of Bijni, tributary both to the English, as the successor of the Muhammadans, and to the Bhutias, who about this time began encroachments on the country to the south of their hills; while another portion—Darrang—came into the possession of his brother Bāli Nārāyan, whose descendants continue to hold it under the British Government. It was not long before the Muhammadans turned their attention to the western division of Nar Nārāyan's dominions, to which his son Lakshmi Nārāyan had succeeded. A line of fortifications had been erected as a defence against Muhammadan invasion all along its southern borders, from the Karatoya on the west to the Brahmaputra on the east. They consisted of lofty earthen ramparts with wide moats on the outer sides, but without flanking angles or towers. They were constructed soon after the division of the kingdom, probably in the time of Nar Nārāyan or his successor, and parts of them are still in excellent preservation. The eastern extremity of this line of defences was turned, when *pargana* Bāharband and the rest of the dominions of Parikshit were taken possession of by the Muhammadans. At some time preceding the final conquest of Rangpur, they also turned the western extremity, and took possession of *pargana* Kūndi, lying north of Pairaband, between the Ghāghāt on the east and Swarūppur on the west. Rangpur proper, otherwise Kuchwāra or *sarkār* Cooch Behar, is that portion of the Koch dominions which was last conquered by the Musalmans from the Cooch Behar Rajas. It included six *chaklās* or divisions. The three smaller ones, Boda, Pātgrām, and Purubbhāg, form the *zamindāri* of the

* This account of the early Koch kings is condensed from Mr. Gait' *History of Assam*, 1906, pp. 46—66.

Cooch Behar Raja; of the other three, Fatehpur and Kāzirhāt* are parcelled out among a number of *zamindārs*, and Kākina is still held as an undivided estate. In the Bengal year 1094, or 1687 A.D., in the reign of Aurangzeb, the Mughals, under the leadership of Ebādat Khan, advanced from Ghorāghāt and occupied the three central *chaklās* of Fatehpur, Kāzirhāt, and Kākina. They consisted of open country, fairly populous, offering no natural obstacles, and appear to have been conquered without much difficulty.† The main current of the Tīsta did not then divide Kākina from Kāzirhāt and Fatehpur, but ran south-west, separating Boda from the rest of Kuchwāra. The three other *chaklās*, namely, Boda beyond the Tīsta to the north-west, Pātgrām to the extreme north-east, and Purubbhāg beyond the Pānga jungles and across the river Dharla to the east, made a desperate resistance. *Faujdār* (governor) after *faujdār* was appointed to Rangpur in quick succession. The struggle lasted for twenty-four years, and towards the close became a three-cornered fight. Jag Deo, and Bhōg or Phōj Deo, of the Baikuntpur family, invaded Cooch Behar on the death of Raja Mahendra Nārāyan laying waste the country where the war was going on, and at the same time kept the Muhammadans at bay; but ultimately Shānta Nārāyan, a cousin of the new Raja Rūp Nārāyan, expelled the Baikuntpur forces, and concluded a peace with the Muhammadans in 1711 A.D. The *chaklās* of Boda, Pātgrām, and Purubbhāg were nominally ceded to the Muhammadans, but still continued to be held in farm by Shānta Nārāyan on behalf of the Cooch Behar State. The fact, that although the Mughals forced the cession, they never wrested these *chaklās* from the hands of the Cooch Behar princes, accounts for the irregular boundary which exists between them and Cooch Behar proper. A long narrow strip of Cooch Behar territory extends from the north of Pātgrām, crossing the present Tīsta and dividing Kāzirhāt from Boda. This would no doubt have been included in the ceded tract if the boundary had ever been regularly laid down. In Pātgrām the very fields are intermixed, one forming part of the *chaklās*, and the next belonging to Cooch Behar territory, to the great confusion of the administration. In the larger *chaklās* first occupied, the Mughal conquerors seem to have pursued a similar policy, leaving in possession, as *chaudhurīs*, the persons who had previously been

* The names Fatehpur and Kāzirhāt, which mean the "place of victory" and the "Judge's market place" respectively, were bestowed on the *chaklās* by the Muhammadan conquerors. But Kāzirhāt is probably an adaptation of Kārjerhat—*kārje* being the name by which the relations on the maternal side of the ruler of Cooch Behar are known.

† The names of many places in the district end in *māri*, slaughter, *e.g.*, Bāghmāri and Chilmāri. It has been suggested that these names were give by Mughal sportsmen who slew tigers (*bagh*), and eagles (*chil*). But this can hardly be, as there are villages named Fulmari and Koimari, *phūl* being flower and *koi*, a very small fish. It is probable, as Dr. Buchanan suggests, that *māri* in these names is the Kamrup pronunciation of *bāri*, home or abode.

in charge of revenue collections under the Cooch Behar dynasty; and so far as is known, no change took place up to the acquisition of the *diwāni* or financial administration of the country by the East India Company in 1765. Kāzirhāt was then divided into five, and Fatehpur into four shares. The Muhammadans called their new conquests Fakīrkūndi, from the Kūndi *pargana* which confronted them across the Ghāghāt where the town of Mahiganj now stands. It is probable that they made their first entry into Kuchwāra at this point. This territory together with the *pargana* of Kūndi in the *sarkār* of Bājuhāya, and the *chaklā* of Ghorāghāt, constituted the district of Rangpur when it passed under the rule of the East India Company, by the *farmān* of the Emperor Shāh Alam in 1765. Within the same jurisdiction was also comprised the extensive district of Rangāmati, which lay on both sides of the river Brahmaputra, and stretched eastwards to the then independent kingdom of Assam. In 1773 the adjacent State of Cooch Behar became dependent on British protection, subject to the payment of a tribute of half its annual revenues into the Rangpur treasury.*

BRITISH PERIOD.

The records of the earlier years of British dominion present a typical picture of the condition of the country at the time of, and for many years subsequent to, the accession of the East India Company to the *diwāni* or financial administration of Bengal. Rangpur was, at this time, a frontier district bordering on Nepāl, Bhutan, Cooch Behar and Assam. The enormous area of the jurisdiction and the weakness of the administrative staff made the maintenance of order in the remoter parts of the district a very difficult matter. Bhitarband and Swarūppur, detached portions of Rājshāhi, offered great facilities for refuge. In 1772 "herds of dacoits," reinforced by disbanded troops from the native armies and by peasants ruined in the famine of 1770, were plundering and burning villages "in bodies of 50,000." In 1784 a military force was despatched against several of these bands, one of which infested the road between Dinājpur and Rangpur. The tract of country lying south of the stations of Dinājpur and Rangpur, and west of the present district of Bogra, towards the Ganges, was a favourite haunt of these *banditti*, being far removed from any central authority. In 1787, Lieutenant Brenan was employed in this quarter against a notorious leader of dacoits, named Bhawāni Pāthak. He despatched a native officer, with twenty-four sepoys, in search of the robbers, who surprised Pāthak, with sixty of his followers, in their boats. A fight took place, in which the leader himself and three of his lieutenants were killed and eight wounded, besides forty-two taken prisoners. Pāthak was a native of Bājpur, and was in league with another noted dacoit, named Mājnu Shāh, who made yearly raids from the

* The tribute is now paid into the Cooch Behar treasury to the credit of the Government of India.

southern side of the Ganges. We catch a glimpse from the Lieutenant's report of a female dacoit, by name Debi Chaudhurāni, also in league with Pāthak. She lived in boats, had a large force of armed retainers in her pay, and committed dacoities on her own account, besides receiving a share of the booty obtained by Pāthak. Her title of Chaudhurāni would imply that she was a *zamindār*—probably a pretty one, else she need not have lived in boats for fear of capture. Regarding the complicity of the landowners with the robbers, Lieutenant Brenan makes the following observations:—"The principal zamindārs in most parts of these districts have always a *banditti* ready to let loose on such of their unfortunate neighbours as have any property worth seizing, and even the lives of the unhappy sufferers are seldom spared. They commit these outrages with the most perfect security, as there is no reward offered for their detection and, from the dependence of the dacoits upon them, they cannot be detected without bribery."

In 1789 we have an account of a large body of bandits who had occupied the Baikuntpur forest, which lies at the northern apex of the district, right under the hills, whence they issued on their predatory excursions. The forest was composed of tree jungle interwoven with cane, and was impassable except by narrow winding paths, known only to the robbers. The Collector got together a force of two hundred *barkandāzes*, and held all the entrances into the forest. Several skirmishes ensued, but months elapsed before any decisive result was obtained. The marauders were at length starved out; some escaped into Nepāl and Bhutan, but great numbers were captured, including their leader and several of his principal associates. Within twelve months, in this and other parts of the district, the Collector arrested and brought to trial 549 dacoits. Large bodies of *sanyāsis* (religious mendicants) traversed the district, levying contributions on the villagers. In 1782 we read of a body of seven hundred persons, consisting of *sanyāsis* and Musalman *fakīrs*, with horses, camels, elephants, and arms of all kinds. Lieutenant Macdonald was sent against them with 180 sepoys, and he brought in the leaders of the gang, but their followers escaped into the hills. Three years later, as many as 1,500 crossed the Brahmaputra at Diwānganj; they had rockets, *jinjal* pieces, and 110 horses. Besides these wandering thieves, there were numbers of *sanyāsis* who settled down in hermitages, which they fortified, and where they carried on their trade of money-lending, combined with dacoity. A report to the Board of Revenue, dated 29th April 1789, makes mention of the seizure of two dacoit boats of 80 and 100 cubits in length, belonging to head *sanyāsis*, and gives a detailed account of the oppressions practised by these scourges, not only on the cultivators, but on the *zamindārs* and their officers, whom they carried off and confined until their demands were satisfied.

The Mughal system of farming out the land revenues to contractors, which the Company for a time maintained, was also a source of much trouble. The exactions of a notorious farmer, Raja Debī Singh of Dinājpur, caused an insurrection of the cultivators in 1783. The revenue officers were driven out. A petition of grievances was submitted to the Collector, who offered various concessions, which did not serve to quell the disturbance. The insurgents committed several murders, and issued a proclamation that they would pay no more revenue. They forced the cultivators of Cooch Behar to join them, and sent parties into Dinājpur to raise the people there. One of the leaders assumed the title of Nawāb; and a tax called *dingkurcha*, or sedition tax, was levied for the expenses of the insurrection. Matters now looked serious, and active measures were taken to put down the rising Forces of *barkandāzes*—the police of the time—were sent out in various directions, and several encounters took place. In an attempt to burn Mughalhāt, the self-styled Nawāb's forces were defeated, and the Nawāb himself wounded and taken prisoner. A party of sepoys under Lieutenant Macdonald marched to the north against the principal body of insurgents and a decisive engagement was fought near Pātgrām on the 22nd February 1783. The sepoys disguised themselves by wearing white clothes over their uniform, and by that means got close to the rebels, who were utterly defeated; sixty were left dead on the field, and many others were wounded and taken prisoners. Two commissions sat to inquire into this insurrection, and it was not till February 1789, in the time of Lord Cornwallis, that the final orders of Government were issued. The guilty contractors were punished and five ringleaders of the insurgents were banished. The Government then entered into direct engagements for the revenue with *zamindārs* and the decennial settlement, subsequently made permanent, was concluded in 1790.

The sepoy officers had full occupation in dealing with local insurrections, gangs of dacoits,* raids from Nepāl, and troubles in Cooch Behar. On one occasion the police pursued some dacoits into Nepalese territory and this raid almost brought on a war with Nepāl. At times, the people took the law into their own hands and in 1800 the headmen of the villages near Gobindganj concerted measures and captured a gang of outlaws numbering eighteen, of whom no trace could be obtained thereafter. The *barkandāz* establishment employed in the district numbered three hundred men, subsequently reduced to half that strength after the successful operations of the Collector narrated above. In addition to this establishment, a native officer and twenty-five sepoys were stationed at Baikuntpur, and a like force at Dimla. Boundary disputes between the *zamindārs* of adjoining districts cropped up in abundance, sometimes resulting in riots and loss of life.

* In 1807 153 dacoities were reported and 151 in the following year.

Such was the state of Rangpur a hundred and twenty years ago. At the present day it is a peaceful North Bengal district. Not a single soldier is stationed there, and such a thing as armed opposition to Government authority is unknown. By the beginning of the last century order was firmly established, and since that time Rangpur has rapidly advanced in prosperity. The subsequent history of the district is merely the recital of administrative changes, the most important of which are indicated in the following pages. Its jurisdiction has undergone many alterations involving a considerable reduction of area. Rangāmati and Dhubri, formerly included in the district under name of North Rangpur, were detached to form the new district of Goālpāra, and placed under the adjacent Province of Assam. Gobindganj *thāna* was transferred to Bogra, on the formation of that district in 1821, but the greater portion of it was re-transferred to Rangpur in 1871. The three police *thānās* of Fakīrganj, Boda, and Sanyāsikata were transferred to the newly created district of Jalpaiguri from the commencement of 1869. The *thāna* of Patgrām was also separted from Rangpur and added to Jalpaiguri from the 1st April 1870. The criminal and revenue jurisdictions of Rangpur are not conterminous. The whole of *pargana* Pātilādaha is borne on the rent-roll of Rangpur, while great part of it lies within the criminal jurisdiction of *thānā* Diwānganj, in Mymensingh district; on the other hand, a large number of estates lying in Rangpur are borne on the revenue rolls of the Dinājpur, Bogra, Jalpaiguri and Goālpāra districts. On the 16th of October 1905, the district was transferred from Bengal to the newly-formed Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

ARCHÆOLOGY.

There are few architectural remains of any value in the district of Rangpur; nor is this surprising, since no stone is procurable as building material and the locally-made bricks are seriously wanting in durability. The extreme humidity of the climate rapidly disintegrates even the best masonry. The relics that remain of the Pāl dynasty have been already described. The most important are the crumbling fortifications of the city of Dharma Pāl, a few miles south of Dimla; a heap of bricks, near the present hamlet of Pātkapāra, two miles west of Dharma Pāl's city, which marks the site of Mayana Mati's citadel; a brick wall and silted up tanks near Wari, 5 miles west of Ulipur, where Gopi Chandra is believed to have had a residence; similar ruins at Udaipur, in *pargana* Bagdwār, 17 miles south-west of Rangpur, where stood the city of Bhava Chandra, otherwise known as Udai Chandra; and a mound of earth and a couple of stone slabs, at Harishchandrerpāt, near the village of Charchāra, 6 miles north-east of Nilphamāri, which mark the site of the palace of Gopi Chandra's father-in-law.

Along the great road from Kamātapur to Ghorāghāt are the ruins of several forts, which are attributed to Nilāmbar, the last Khen king. The most extensive are at Chatra, 6 miles west of Pīrganj, where they stretch over three-quarters of a mile, and

are enclosed by a lofty rampart and moat. They are now buried in impenetrable jungle. The remains of another fort lie at the southern extremity of the *Bara Bhīl*. The great rampart which crosses the middle of the district from the Karatoya to the Brahmaputra, a few miles south of Rangpur, and which is still in excellent preservation, was the work of the Koch kings.

Among Muhammadan antiquities the best known is the mosque at Bara Dargā, 18 miles south of Rangpur on the Bogra road, where the mace of Ismail Ghāzi is said to be preserved. The *fakīr* in charge holds extensive *jāgīrs* of land. Another mosque at Kānta Duar, 7 miles west of Pīrganj, is said to contain the head of the Ghāzi. His tomb is believed to be in the centre of the *Bara Bhīl*, but no traces of it remain. The mausoleum of Shāh Julāl Bokhāri at Mahiganj (Rangpur) is held in great veneration by Muhammadans.

In the south of the district, 2½ miles east of Gobindganj, there are the ruins of two old temples, popularly known as Sarbamangala and Shyamsundar. From the inscriptions it would appear that they were built about the year 1601 A.D. by Raja Bhagwān, one of the ancestors of the present *zamindār* of Bardhankote.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

GROWTH OF POPULATION.

Several early attempts had been made towards an enumeration of the people, but the results of the general census of 1872 proved that all previous estimates were very wide of the mark. The earliest recorded estimate is that of 1789, in which year the Collector returned the population of the then district (including Cooch Behar) at 459,512. This, after striking out the figures relating to tracts since separated, and, on the other hand, allowing for subsequent transfers to Rangpur, would amount to a population in 1789, for the area comprising the present district, of about 400,000. This estimate must have been very much too low; but at that time it was almost inevitable that the number of the people should be understated, as it was the interest of the *zamindārs* to make out their lands to be in as poor and unpeopled a state as possible. In 1809 Dr. Buchanan Hamilton returned the population of Rangpur at 2,735,000, or 2,084,000 according to the present limits of the district. The figures approximate very closely to the population of the district as ascertained by the general census in 1872 (2,150,179); and Mr. Glazier, the Collector, was of opinion that they considerably exceeded the population as existing in 1809, and gave the following reasons in support of his view :—" According to Buchanan Hamilton's estimate, the population was almost the same in 1809 as at present, after a prosperous period of over sixty years. When he went over the land, it was fairly cultivated, but there was still a large quantity of good land left that had not come under the plough ; and it is out of the question to suppose that there has been no increase of population since his time. Very little land is left uncultivated now; and the complaint all over the country is that there is not enough grazing ground for the cattle. Buchanan Hamilton arrived at his figures in the following manner. He passed through a great part of the district, and from his personal observation and inquiries in every direction he made a calculation of the quantity of cultivated land; and, assuming that one plough could cultivate fifteen bighas or five acres, to every plough he counted five persons for the agricultural population, adding to his results certain proportions to make up the non-agricultural portion of the people. Now, taking as correct his calculation of cultivated land—a very large assumption—it seems to me that the appointment of five persons of agricultural population to each plough is excessive. The families in this district are small; the boys begin early to follow the plough; and many are compelled to remain unmarried to a comparatively

late age, because the well-to-do classes of the agriculturists monopolise more than their fair share of the women. I think a calculation of three to a plough would be much nearer the truth; and this would give a population (for the area of the existing district) in 1809 of 1,200,000. Buchanan Hamilton in 1809 estimated that the population had increased one-third during the preceding twenty years. Taking the increase as such, the population having doubled in many parts mainly by immigration, and calculating a further increase of two-thirds for the sixty-three years between 1809 and 1872, which seems a not excessive estimate, the figures (for the area of the existing district) would stand thus in round numbers:—population in 1789, 720,000; ditto in 1809, 1,200,000; ditto in 1872, 2,149,972 (Census figures)."

The first regular Census of Rangpur was taken simultaneously throughout the district on the night of the 15th January 1872, disclosing a total population of 2,149,972 souls. As regards the accuracy of the Census, the district officer was of opinion that "he would be a bold man who would say that the Census was accurate;" but he "believes that every precaution was taken to secure as accurate a Census as possible and the figures given may fairly be presumed to be approximate."

The Census of 1881 showed that the population had declined to 2,097,964 and a further diminution was recorded at the Census of 1891 which returned the figure 2,065,464. Between 1872 and 1891 malarial fever was very prevalent and the district lost more than 4 per cent of its population. The *thānās* that suffered most before 1881 were Rangpur, Mithāpūkur and Pīrganj in the centre of the district. In 1891 these *thānās* taken together had recovered some of their losses, but there was a general decadence in all the *thānās* to the east and north of them and in Bādarganj which adjoins them on the west. The death-rate from fever was very high throughout the decade, and there were frequent outbreaks of cholera, which was imported by coolies passing through the district *en route* for Assam. The prevalence of malaria was attributed to the obstruction of the old drainage channels south and west of the Tīsta, and the generally water-logged condition of the district

Census of 1901.

The Census of 1901 disclosed a population of 2,154,181 or an increase of 4·2 per cent. This result is due in great measure to immigration, and if this were left out of account the increment would not much exceed 1 per cent. The population now is exactly what it was thirty years ago when the Census was first taken. All the *thānās* of the district, except five, shared in this increase. During the decade the crops on the whole had been very good, and even in 1897 the distress was comparatively slight. No relief works were found necessary and the amount distributed in charitable doles was small. There had been a great expansion

in railway communications. Gaibanda sub-division was rendered more accessible by the line running from Santahār to Fulchāri on the Brahmaputra, the Cooch Behar Railway was completed in the north, the Bengal Duars Railway was opened to traffic and the Tista river was bridged. These operations not only opened out and enriched the country but they brought many labourers into the district. The material condition of the people had improved vastly. They were better fed, clothed and educated. Lastly, the earthquake of 1897, which did much harm to roads and buildings, appears to have had some beneficial results. It caused marked variations in the levels of a great part of the district and facilitated its drainage. Malaria undoubtedly abated after the earthquake. The number of deaths during the triennium preceding and following 1897 are 223,034 and 190,883 respectively. In Gaibanda sub-division, where the earthquake was most active, the increase of population is most marked, *viz.*, 12 per cent.

The principal statistics of the Census of 1901 are reproduced below:—

Sub-division.	Area in square miles	Number of Towns	Number of Villages	Population.	Population per square mile.	Percentage of variation in population between 1891 and 1901.
Sadr ...	1,141	1	1,897	658,291	577	1·8
Nilphamāri ...	648	3	370	461,314	712	3·0
Kurigrām	942	1	1,518	514,392	546	1·3
Gaibanda ...	762	1	1,427	520,184	683	12·2
District Total .	3,493	6	5,212	2,154,181	617	4·3

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS. Density of population.

Rangpur is the most populous district in the Rājshāhi Division, the density of its population being 617 persons per square mile or an average of nearly one person for every acre. Only in the three police circles (*thānās*) of Ulipur, Pirganj and Mithāpūkur is the population less than 500 to the square mile. The whole district is more amply watered than any other in the division, and this probably accounts for its denser population. Formerly the most thickly inhabited parts, excepting Rangpur and Mahiganj, were the tracts on either side of the Tista, which bisects the district from north-west to south-east, *viz.*, Dimla, Jaldhāka, Kāliganj, Lālmonirhāt (Barabāri), and Sundarganj. Since the introduction of railways, however, there is a tendency for the *thānas*, traversed by the various lines, to profit at the expense of the rest.

Nilphamāri, Gaibanda and Bādarganj show a higher percentage of increase of population in the decade ending in 1901 than any of the above-named *thānās*. The growth of Nilphamāri is due in part to the railway settlement at Saidpur and the flourishing trade centre at Darwāni, and in part to the healthiness of the locality and the extension of jute and tobacco cultivation. The greatest expansion has taken place in the Gaibanda sub-division, where it is due partly to the advent of the railway, and partly to its comparative salubrity and to the extension of jute cultivation which has attracted settlers, from the unhealthy *thānās* to the north-west, and also from Pabna and Mymensingh. Population is most sparse in the *thānās* of Pīrganj, Mithāpūkur, Ulipur and Nāgeshwari. All these areas are remote from the railways and in every case the population is less now than it was in 1872. A considerable part of Pīrganj consists of poor *khiyār* soil which cannot maintain a dense population. Mithāpūkur is extremely unhealthy and ill-drained, and its soil is sandy and comparatively unfertile. The eastern half of Ulipur consists of the sandy islands of the Brahmaputra; they are of recent formation and liable to annual inundation. Nāgeshwari is the most backward and neglected *thānā* in the district: its people are the most illiterate, its roads are fewest and worst kept, and there is no provision for medical relief of any kind. A large part of the area, moreover, consists of sandy *chars* and of jungle. Mahiganj and Kurigrām *thānās* showed a considerable decrease of population at the last Census, which is attributed, in the former case, to malaria and, in the latter, to diluvion and outbreaks of cholera.

igration.

As in the other districts of North Bengal, the number of its inhabitants who leave Rangpur is much smaller than the number of immigrants. In 1901 there were 109,416 of the latter to 54,162 of the former. The fertility of the soil and the comparatively low rates of rent attract permanent settlers. The proportion of males and females among these is about equal. There is in addition, every year in the cold weather, a large number of temporary immigrants from Behar and the United Provinces who come in search of employment on railways, roads and tanks and in the fields. The great majority of these are males, and as the Census is taken during their stay, which extends up to the beginning of the monsoons, the preponderance of males over females registered in the district is accentuated. A large number of similar immigrants also come to the district for work in the jute season and at the time of the winter rice harvest; but as these retire to their homes in February or earlier, the Census figures give no count of them. The ebb and flow of population across the borders of contiguous districts is against Rangpur, which gains on the south from Bogra and Mymensingh and loses on the east, west and north to Goālpāra, Dinājpur, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. It gains, however, by migration with places at a distance,

especially from Pabna, Dacca and Nadia, and still more so from Behar and the United Provinces.

Towns and villages.

The population of the district is almost entirely rural. There are six towns, *viz.*, Rangpur, Saidpur, Nilphamāri, Kurigrām, Gaibanda and Domār, with a population in 1901 of 15,960, 5,848, 2,396, 1,774, 1,635 and 1,868 respectively. The total urban population is thus 29,484, while the rural population is 2,124,697 souls, congregated in 5,212 villages. At the Census of 1891, Rangpur was the only place treated as a town. There is no tendency perceptible on the part of the people towards town or city life. Saidpur owes its urban character to its being made the headquarters of the northern section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and Domār to its being a busy centre of the jute trade. There are no village sites such as are found in Behar. The village adopted as the Census unit is the *mauza* or fiscal unit demarcated at the time of the Revenue Survey. As a matter of fact, the rural population is scattered over the district in innumerable hamlets, locally known as *pāras*, the position of which is not restricted in any way by *mauza* boundaries, but is determined solely by the convenience of the cultivators who own the neighbouring lands. The number of such hamlets or residential villages would be far in excess of the Census figure (5,212). The *mauza* of Dimla, for instance, which is 15 square miles in area and has a population of over 10,000, comprises a number of such hamlets, each of which has its own distinctive name. On the other hand, a hamlet often falls within the boundaries of several *mauzas*. In ancient times there appears to have been some form of village government: it included the *thākur* (proprietor), the *patwāri* (accountant), the *mardha* (assessor), the *chaukidār* (watchman), the *chamār* (shoe-maker), whose wife acted as midwife, the carpenter, blacksmith, washerman and potter. All these were entitled to a definite share in the produce of the lands. This system died out long before the district came under British rule. At the present day the only village officials, if so they may be called, known to the people, are the *panchāyat*, who is really only a *chaukidāri*-tax collector, the *chaukidār*, who is a rural subordinate policeman and the *zamīndāri* officials—the *naib*, *gumāshta* and *tahsīldār*—who are merely rent-collectors. Every *pāra*, however, has its elders or headmen (*mandals*, *dewānias*) to whose arbitrament, in a public meeting (*sālis*, *baitak*), the decision of disputes—not necessarily confined to caste or social matters—is frequently referred.

Sex.

Rangpur affords an illustration of the proposition that "there is some kind of correspondence between sex and race and women are fewest in Bengal amongst the Mongoloid tribes of East and North Bengal and their Muhammadan congeners."* There are only 915 women to 1,000 men in the district and the deficiency in

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* E. A. Gait, *Bengal Census Report*, 1901.

the case of Hindus is as high as 13 per cent. and in the case of the urban population 35 per cent.

Language. The language of the district is known as *Rangpūri* or *Rājbansi*—a well-marked dialect of Bengali, which is also spoken in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and parts of Goālpāra, Dinājpur, Bogra and Darjiling districts. The majority of the people who speak the language are of Koch extraction and the Bengali which they speak naturally shows traces of an eastern origin in its vocabulary; at the same time it bears many points of close resemblance to the dialect of Eastern Bengal.* The dialect has many peculiarities in regard to pronunciation. The consonant *r* at the beginning of a word is frequently elided, *e.g.*, *rāndhite* (to cook) is pronounced *āndhite*. Conversely, where a word begins with a vowel, the consonant *r* is often prefixed, *e.g.*, *ām* is pronounced *rām*. The letters *l* and *n* are frequently interchanged, and the letters *chh* and *j* are pronounced as *s* and *z* respectively.† The first and second personal pronouns are always used in the plural. And in every direction there is a marked tendency to contract words, which is very perplexing to one who is only familiar with standard Bengali. These peculiarities are, however, more common among the Rājbansis than among the Muhammadans and other Hindu castes, and the dialect tends more and more to approximate to what are known as the Northern and Eastern Bengal dialects.

Many words of Hindi or Persian origin are in common use among the Muhammadans. Thus for "water" they say *pāni* and for "bath" *ghusal*, while the Rājbansis say *jal* and *snān* respectively. The "song of Manik Chandra" described in Chapter I is a good example of the Rangpūri *patois*. There are also translations in this dialect of the Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana and other Sanscrit works.

...ES. The ethnic character of the people of Rangpur has been the subject of much controversy. Two-thirds of the Hindu population are known as Rājbansis, and they claim to be descendants of Bhanga-Kshatriyas from Arya-varta. In the time of Sāgar Raja of the Rāmāyana, a number of outcaste Kshatriyas settled in the *Paundra desh*, which is believed to be the country lying on both banks of the old Karatoya river. At a later date when many Kshatriyas fled from the destroying axe of the Brāhman warrior Parasurām, who had vowed their extermination, some settled in Jalpesh Mahādeo, the present Jalpaiguri, and, to escape detection, abandoned their religion and language and became fused with the aboriginal population. In Dr. Grierson's opinion,‡ it is certain that Rangpur had Hindu colonists at a very early period of Indian history, because the Karatoya is mentioned in the Mahābhārata

* G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, 1903.

† Dr Buchanan attributed this defective articulation to the practice of "cramming their mouths with betel."

‡ J. A. S. B., Vol. XLVI, p. 186.

and the Lohitya—the portion of the Brahmaputra on the east boundary of the district—is also alluded to. Moreover, the district long formed part of the *Kraunchu* or Cooch Behar kingdom, and *Kraunoha*, according to Dr. Grierson, is equivalent to *Krukta* or "recreant," indicating the Kshatriya warriors who gave up their Vedic faith for the gods of the hillmen. On the other hand, Mr. Risley,* relying mainly on facial appearance and anthropometrical observations holds that the Rājbansis are Koches, and that they are a Dravidian race, with a suspicion of Mongolian admixture. In his opinion they come of "a Dravidian stock, which may probably have occupied the valley of the Ganges at the time of the Aryan advance into Bengal. Driven forward by this incursion into the swamps and forests of north and north-eastern Bengal, the tribe were here and there brought into contact with Mongoloid races and their type may have been affected to a varying degree by intermixture with these people. But on the whole, Dravidian characteristics predominate among them." Mr. Gait† is of opinion that the true Koches, for example, those of Assam, are a Mongoloid race and that the Rājbansis were originally an entirely distinct community of Dravidian affinities, but being the most numerous Hinduised community in the neighbourhood, their name was adopted by the Koches west of the Manās river when they attorned to Hinduism. East of the Manās, where there were no Rājbansis properly so called, the Koches, as the dominant tribe, were admitted to Hinduism without any change of tribal name. The Rājbansis are therefore, according to Mr. Gait, either pure Koches, or else a mixed race in which the Mongoloid element usually preponderates.

According to the *Tabāqat-i-Nasiri* (1260 A.D.), which records the expedition of Bakhtyār Khiljī, the inhabitants of North Bengal were the Koch, Mech and Tharu tribes, who resembled a south Siberian tribe and whose features struck the invaders as peculiar. The *Ain-i-Akbāri*, three centuries later, describes the people of Kamrup or Kamāta as "good looking." Lapse of time and admixture with other races had probably, by then, softened the Mongolian characteristics of their physiognomy. Ralph Fitch,‡ who visited the Koch kingdom in the 16th century, says:—"The people have ears which be marvellous great, of a span long, and which they draw out by devises when they be young." The practice of distending the lobe of the ear by wearing bunches of metal rings has been abandoned by the Koches, but is still in vogue among the Gāros. Later observers, like Bryan, Hodgson and Buchanan, were also of opinion that the Koches were a Mongoloid race and all the early authorities are silent as to the presence of a Dravidian race among the population.

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* *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, 1891, p 491.
† *History of Assam*, 1906, p 45.
‡ Ralph Fitch, by J. Horton Ryley, 1899, p 111.

At the present time, there are very few persons in the district who retain the designation of Koch. These are very dark in complexion and usually pursue the calling of palki-bearers, supplemented by agriculture. The term Koch is in great disrepute and Mr. Risley notes that at the Census of 1881, not a single Koch could be found in Cooch Behar. In Rangpur, if a Muhammadan wishes to annoy a Rājbansi he calls him a Koch; and the Rājbansi retorts by calling the other a *turug* or Turk. The physiognomy of the present day Rangpur Rājbansi preserves many Mongoloid characteristics. He is usually of medium height and robust build; the head is square, the eyes somewhat obliquely set, the nose short, wide and low in the bridge and the cheek-bones prominent. All Rājbansi women wear the old Kamrup dress, which offers a marked contrast to the Bengal *sāri*. It consists of a piece of coloured cloth, passed round the body, under the arms, reaching to the knees below and leaving the head and shoulders bare. The Mongol type is unmistakable in those portions of the district which lie around Cooch Behar; Dravidian characteristics—the squat figure, irregular face and thick lip and nose—are met with in the south. It is curious that early historians and observers make no reference to the presence of a Dravidian community in Kamrup, but anthropometrical data and the fact that Bengali has been the language of the Rājbansis for several centuries leave no room for doubt that the Koches, at an early period, came in contact and amalgamated with a Bengali-speaking race of Dravidian affinities.

It may therefore be held that the Rājbansis of Rangpur are principally of Koch extraction and belong to the Mongoloid type; that there has been an admixture of the Dravidian element, which is slight in the north and considerable in the south; and that the strain of Aryan blood is very slender and not observable now.

A similar controversy rages over the question of the origin of the Musalmans, who, in this district, constitute two-thirds of the population. Mr. Beverley in the Census Report of 1872 propounded the theory that "the existence of Muhammadans in Bengal is due not so much to the introduction of Mughal blood into the country as to the conversion of the former inhabitants, for whom a rigid system of caste discipline rendered Hinduism intolerable." As regards Rangpur, it is suggested that when Bisva Singh, king of Kuchwāra, early in the 16th century, with all the people of condition in his realm, apostatised to Hinduism and assumed the name of Rājbansis, the lower classes who were refused a decent status in the caste regime, adopted Islam in preference to helot Hinduism. The Keyots and Bādyakars, Muhammadan fishermen and musicians respectively, are cited as examples in Rangpur and there can be little doubt that they are converts. In other cases, the conversions, it is said, were more or less forcible and due to the proselytising zeal of propagandists like Ismail Ghāzi

or prompted by the hope of securing favour or escaping punishment. The institution of slavery was an ordinary incident of Muhammadan rule, and it was not unusual for Hindus in times of famine, pestilence or civil war to sell their children as Musalman slaves. It is pointed out that the name of Nasya, which means degraded or contaminated and was applied to renegade Hindus, is borne by 93,000 Muhammadans in Rangpur at the present day and that the number was much greater formerly, before the substitution of the name Sheikh became common. Much stress is laid on the fact that they speak the same language as the Rājbansis, although religious and other influences have led to the importation of words of Persian or Arabic origin. Moreover, many of their women until recently wore, and some even now wear, the old Kamrup dress in vogue among Rājbansi women, and married women frequently use vermilion on their foreheads. To this day many social and religious customs* are common to Rājbansis and low class Muhammadans. For example, the Rājbansi *dār goodh* marriage ceremony is the same as the Muhammadan *goodh pānkātā*; the bridal platform, *marwa*, decorated with plantain trees, is used by both communities; the services of a barber are in request on the birth of a Muhammadan as well as a Hindu child and the same precautions are taken to keep away evil spirits; Satya-Nārāyan Deo is worshipped as Satya Pīr and Bisa Hari Debī as Bisa Hari Bibi. The next argument is that the appearance of Muhammadans of the district bears a striking resemblance to that of the Rājbansis and anthropometrical measurements establish that they are of Mongoloid or Dravidian rather than Aryan or Semitic origin. It is also urged, as against the theory of immigration, that in Rangpur, one of the last districts conquered by the Moslems, the number of followers of the Koran is 63 per cent, while the proportion in Murshidabad, so long the seat of their government, is only 50 per cent; and in Behar, which came under their rule even earlier, it is much less. Lastly it is pointed out that the Muhammadans would not willingly make their homes in the marshes of Rangpur, and it is known that in the rainy season the officers of the Mughal Government used to leave Rangpur and retire to Murshidabad. It is not denied, however, that there are many leading families in this and other districts who can trace their origin to a Mughal, Afghān or Arab source; and even among the mass of the people, a strong figure, full beard, bull neck, high nose and light complexion often proclaim a foreign origin.†

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* In some parts of the district, there are many names common to the two communities. Thus in Nilphāmari, there are both Hindus and Muhammadans named Gopal, Chengroo, Kowa and Chila, the former being distinguished only by the designation of Das and the latter by that of Nasya.

† For a general discussion of this question see E. A. Gait, "Census of Bengal Report, 1901," p. 165 *et seq*

The theory of immigration has been ably advanced by Khondokār Fuzli Rubbee.* He points out the various circumstances that contributed to create a constant stream of settlers: the numerous invasions, the grants of *jāgīrs* to soldiers and of *lakhirājes* to men of learning and theologians, the efforts made by the Afghān kings to colonise their conquests, the attractions of a wealthy and fertile country, and the security enjoyed by religious or political refugees from Delhi. It is pointed out that the Muhammadans are far more prolific than the Hindus and that their descendants after the lapse of centuries naturally out-number the indigenous population. Moreover, Muhammadan historians make no mention of missionary activity, and there is next to no record of any forcible conversions. There is no mention in the *Rājopākhyanmāla*, the *Jogini Tantra* or any other early Cooch Behar authority, of the alleged attornment of Koch dissenters to Islām when Bisva Singh made Hinduism the State religion of Kuchwāra The reason assigned for their apostacy is not convincing. Low class Hindus at the present day, in spite of the spread of education and liberal ideas, do not find their position degraded or intolerable; much less would this be the case in an age of darkness, when aspirations for independent action and social advancement were undreamt of. The Keyots and Bādyakars† of Rangpur—assuming that they are converts—have not profited socially by their apostasy. Muhammadans of good class will not eat or smoke with them and their dead are buried in separate grounds. If the interpretation of the word Nasya to mean "degraded" is correct, it is unlikely that a term of reproach should be adopted as a designation, and still more improbable that it should be retained after the Muhammadans got the upper hand in the district. It has been suggested that *nasya* is a corruption of *laskar*, Muhammadan soldier. The alteration of the initial consonant and the terminal contraction are not unusual in the Rangpūri dialect. Similarly, the descendants of Portuguese settlers in the district were known as "choldar," a corruption of soldier.‡ The similarity in some respects of dress and social and religious observances among Rājbansis and Muhammadans is explained as the natural result of two communities living side by side for centuries. It is urged that the resemblance between Rājbansis and Muhammadans is by no means striking or universal, and that even in Cooch Behar it is admitted that the Nasyas can be distinguished from the Rājbansis by their appearance—well-cut features and a high nose—and by their superior intelligence.§

* *Origin of the Muhammdans of Bengal*, 1895.

† Dr. Buchanan in 1809 observed that the Muhammadan fishermen known as Keyots were Hindu converts, that they retained caste in full force and did not intermarry with other Moslems. The exclusiveness, however, appears to have been on the side of the latter, and to this day the Keyots are regarded as a degraded class. The same remarks apply to the Bādyakars (musicians).

‡ W. Hamilton's *Description of Hindustan*, 1820, p. 212.

§ *The Cooch Behar State*, 1903, by Rai Calica Doss Dutt, Bahadur.

The weak point in the theory of conversion is that it finds little support in history or legend; on the other hand, the immigration theory does not account for the physical resemblance of the majority of Muhammadans to the Rājbansis, and their numerical preponderance. The correct view is probably an intermediate one. The protagonists, on either side, have omitted to attach due weight to the circumstance that the foreign settlers would in most cases have to obtain their wives from the indigenous race, and that the proportion of foreign blood would become more and more attenuated in each succeeding generation. The conclusion to be drawn as regards the Muhammadans of Rangpur is that a few families are of unmixed foreign origin; that a considerable number are of mixed descent—the indigenous Koch or Chandāl element preponderating; and that the rest, possibly the majority, are descendants of Koch or Rājbansi converts.

RELIGION.

Buddhism appears to have made its way into Kamrup at an early date. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsāng, who visited the country about 700 A.D., came across several Buddhist temples. The Pāl kings, there is reason for believing, were Buddhists and the Jogis appear to have been a degraded Buddhist priesthood.* Ralph *Hitch*,† who visited the country in the 16th century, says:—"Here they be all gentiles and they will kill nothing. They have hospitals for sheep, goats, dogs, cats and birds, and for all living creatures. When they be old or lame, they keep them until they die. If a man catch or buy any quick thing in other places and bring it hither, they will give him money for it or other victuals and keep it in their hospitals or let it go. They will give meat to ants." At a later date, however, the Muhammadan writer Al-Badāoni ‡ speaks of "the devout Hindus in the country of Kamrup, who having dedicated themselves to their idol, live for one year in the height of luxury, enjoying everything that comes to their hands; but, at the end of that period, cast themselves under the wheels of its car." The disappearance of Buddhism or its absorption in Hinduism is a problem that yet awaits solution. At the present day it is practically extinct in this district.

Nearly two-thirds of the population, according to the Census of 1901, are Muhammadans and a little more than one-third are Hindus. The number of Christians is 453 and most of them live in the railway town of Saidpur. There are 4,200 Animists and other creeds contribute about a thousand. Hindus are most numerous in the north, and their number in the area comprised in the *thānās* of Nilphamāri, Jaldhāka, Dimla and Kaliganj is equal to that of the Muhammadans. In the two last named *thānās* they constitute the majority. The followers of Islām are most numerous in the *thānās* of Bādarganj, Mithāpūkur, Pirganj, Ulipur,

* *Vide* ante p. 20.
† Ralph Hitch, by J Horton Ryley, 1899, p. 111.
‡ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawā ikh*, translatebyd Lowe, 1884, Vol. II, p. 192.

Gaibanda and Gobindganj. A considerable proportion of them in the three last named *thānās* are immigrants from southern districts.

Muhammadans. Almost all the Muhammadans of the district are Sunnis. There is a very small sect who are indifferently known as Muhammadis, Farāzis, Sharāis or Rāfi-yadains. They are orthodox followers of the Koran and the *Hadis* or traditions. They do not venerate the *pīrs*, nor do they celebrate the *moulood*—the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet. There are differences also in the details of ritual and ceremonies. They regard the rest of the Muhammadans as *be-sharāis, i.e.*, men who do not follow the scriptures strictly. A tendency towards more rigid orthodoxy is now observable among the Sunnis ; this is attributed to the influence of itinerant maulvies from the west and the study of Arabic. The lower classes, however, have not yet abandoned the practice of appealing to Hindu deities,* and this disposition is reciprocated to a certain extent by low caste Hindus The *dargās* or shrines of the celebrated Ismail Ghāzi al Kāntaduar, and of Shāh Jalāl Bokhāri at Mahiganj attract worshippers from both creeds. There are many other *dargās*, of greater or less note, in the district. Many Hindu superstitions still survive. For example, bamboos are not cut on a Sunday and business of no kind is taken up on the last day (*dwāja*) of each Bengali month. Amulets and charms (*tābiz*) are commonly worn. The Muhammadan population is growing at a relatively much greater rate than the Hindu. This is not due to conversions, of which very few are reported. The greater fecundity of the Muhammadans is explained by the prevalence of polygamy and widow-remarriage, the lesser inequality in the ages of husband and wife, the greater nutritiousness of their dietary, and their greater material prosperity.

Hindus. Hindus constitute a little over a third of the population. In the north of the district, which came last under Muhammadan influence, the proportion of Hindus is much greater, being 57 per cent in the *thānās* of Dimla and Kāliganj. There are two great sects, the Sakta and the Vaishnab, but Siva also is generally worshipped. The Rājbansis, who form the bulk of the Hindu population, profess to be Vaishnabs, but the religion they practise is not free from aboriginal rites. Thus one of the forms in which Sakti is worshipped is Chandi. Unlike Durga, Chandi is painted red and may be worshipped throughout the year. This form of Sakti *puja* is peculiar to the district. Buri or Burichandi, the presiding deity of rivers and *hāts*, is one of the Koch godlings, but is worshipped by the Rājbansis also. When represented only by a floral crown, and not by an image, she may be worshipped without the ministrations of a Brāhman. This circumstance is regarded as a sign of the aboriginal character of this *puja*. Another example is the Charak *puja*—a Sivaite rite commonly practised in the district.

* In the Rangpur Sahitya Parishat Library, there is a very old manuscript hymn, composed in honour of Satya Pir by one Shāh Kāla Muhammad.

The worship of Dharma holds a prominent place in the religious observances of the people. Dharma is the omnipresent and omniscient god of justice and the sun is regarded as his emblem Sunday is a special day of fasting and is known as God's day (*deobār*), and in times of stress a Rājbansi appeals to the sun for justice. Vishnu is worshipped by all Rājbansis and the Gita of Gobinda Misrā—an early teacher of the Vaishnab cult—which is in the Rājbansi dialect, is held in the highest veneration. In addition to the principal Hindu deities, the Rājbansis worship many rural (*grāmya*) and local gods, chief of whom are Sonarai, the god of wild animals, Gorakhnath the god of cowherds, Hudum-Deo the rain-god, Madan-kam the god of generation, Balarām the plough-god and Bisa-hāri the snake-goddess.* The custom of widow-remarriage prevails to a certain extent, but is gradually dying out.

Christians. The European and Eurasian employees of the railway constitute the majority of the Christian population. There is a Baptist Mission at Rangpur which has made a small number of converts, including a few Santāls.

Animists and others. The small colonies of Santāls and Oraons numbering about 5,500 are Animists by religion. Most of them have been imported by landowners from the adjoining district of Dinājpur and some have come from their homes in the Santāl Parganas and Chhota Nāgpur. The Brāhmo Samāj has only a handful of adherents in Rangpur.

TRIBES AND CASTES. Muhammadans. The majority of the Muhammadans are Sheikhs, 93,000 are Nasyas, 6,400 are returned as Pathāns and 2,200 claim to be Saiyads. The Sheikhs are chiefly cultivators, but many of them go in for trade. The families of foreign extraction are generally Pathāns, Saiyads, Khondkārs and Khāns. There are 1,700 Bhātiyas or immigrants from the down stream, that is from Pabna, Mymensingh and other districts in the south. They are hardy and enterprising men who take up the new lands formed along the banks of rivers. It is believed that they sometimes add river dacoity to their agricultural occupation. The great majority of Muhammadans are cultivators. They have a large number of enure-holders, but only one *zamīndār* of any importance, namely, Khān Bahadur Abdul Majid Chaudhuri of Mahipur. The number of professional men and clerks is small, but is rapidly increasing. The local brokers or *paikārs* and the *dewānias* are chiefly Muhammadans. The community furnishes many cartmen and fish-vendors, but few fishermen. The Keyots and Bādyakars, who are fishermen and musicians respectively, are probably the descendants of low-caste Hindu converts.

Hindu castes. Brāhmans. There are 11,000 Brāhmans in the district. According to Buchanan, the earliest Brāhman settlement appears to have been

* This paragraph is based, in part, on a note by Babu Panchanan Sirkar, B.L.

introduced from Mithila or Tirhūt by the Rajas of Kamātapur in the 13th or 14th century. The next Brāhman colony consisted of immigrants from Kanauj or Oudh who were introduced by king Bisva Singh early in the 16th century. Both these classes of Brāhmans perform sacerdotal services for the lower castes. In the south of the district, the Brāhmans principally belong to the Bārendra and Rārhi classes and many of them are landowners. These Brāhmans would lose purity by ministering to Sūdras and they look down upon the two first-named classes. A few Utkala or Orissa Brāhmans are found in Rangpur, as also families from the west of India called *bhuiyāri* or *zamindāri* Brāhmans. In recent times many Brāhman families have migrated from other parts of Bengal and taken up their abode in this district. Most of them do not follow their spiritual vocation, but find employment in various capacities under Government or in *zamindāri kacheris* and railway and commercial offices, and some follow the liberal professions.

Kāyasths. There are 8,500 Kāyasths in Rangpur. There number is decreasing, as they mustered 11,500 in 1881 and 10,000 in 1891. They follow every occupation open to the respectable classes, and all clerical establishments are largely manned by them. Not a few of the leading *zamindārs* belong to this caste, and it is also largely represented in the professions and in commerce The ancestors of some of them took service with the Hindu and Mughal rulers as farmers of revenue or as revenue officers and clerks, but the majority are recent immigrants from other Bengal districts. All the classes of Kāyasths, except the Bongāja, are represented in the district Until recently there was a section of them known as "Katāki" Kāyasths whose original home was Cuttack, but they are now merged in the Dakhin-Rārhi class.

Sūdras. The Sūdras include the Nabasakha castes—the Goālas or milkmen, the Telis and Tilis or oilmen and grocers, the Tāntis or weavers, the Bāruis or betel-growers, the Kamārs and Lohārs or smiths, the Nāpits or barbers, the Kumbārs or potters and the Mayras or confectioners. The last named were mostly returned at the last Census as Kūris; they have long since abandoned the calling of confectioners and are now cultivators. The Khens or Khyans, who number 12,000, are also given a place among the Sūdras. They are said to be the caste to which the dynasty of king Nilāmbar, who was overthrown by Husain Shāh, belonged. In Assam they are known in Kōlitas. They are orthodox Hindus and are served by the same Brāhmans as the Nabasakha group. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton states that "they are the only Kamrup tribe that the Brāhmans of Bengal admit to be true Sudras, which clearly shows the great power that their princes held." At the present day their chief occupations are cultivation and domestic service under high caste Hindus. Half the Khens in the district live in the Kurigram sub-division.

Lower castes.

Among castes lower than the Sūdras are the Sūris or Sahas, whose original occupation was the manufacture of spirituous liquors, but who are now chiefly traders and landowners; the Sutradhars or carpenters; the Baishnabs or Bairāgis, who number 22,000; and the Jogis or Jugis, who were at one time probably the priesthood of the country, but are now very much looked down upon and earn their living as cultivators, lime-burners and religious mendicants. Still lower in the social scale are the Chāsi-Kaibarttas who follow the plough; the Namasūdras or Chandāls who are fishermen or cultivators; the Pātnis, Mālos and Tiyārs who are boatmen or fishermen; the Rājbansis, the Koches and the Doāis. The position of the Rājbansis is gradually improving. They are giving up their un-Hindu practices and getting educated; the higher castes sometimes accept water from them and Kamākhya or Kamrup Brāhmans superintend their religious observances while the Gosains of Navadip act as their preceptors. Near Naldanga a set of out-caste Rājbansis, known as Mandua Rājbansis, are met with; they are said to have lost caste through having by mistake killed an ox, instead of a buffalo, on a dark Kāli Puja night. The Rājbansis are a versatile race and make good smiths, carpenters, milkmen and domestic servants. The principal occupation of the Rangpur Koches and Doāis is *pālki*-carrying, but many of them are also cultivators. The Doāis, who number 15,000, are believed to be a mongrel Gāro tribe and were described by Buchanan as "the most depraved of the Koch tribe and the most impure of the Rājbansi." The lowest castes are the Mūchis and Chamārs who number 10,000 and pursue the calling of tanners or shoemakers; and the Dōms, Bhuimālis and Hāris who are sweepers and scavengers. One section of the last-named caste, who are found only in Rangpur town and are known as Dālia Hāris, will not serve the natives of the country. They are supposed to have come as sweepers from West Bengal with European employers, and are possibly allied to the Dulia Bāgdis. Most of the Dōms have abandoned their old profession and taken to making baskets and mats.

CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE.

The average level of intelligence is comparatively low. This is probably due to the fact that until the advent of British rule the district had little contact with civilisation and until railways were introduced 30 years ago, it was difficult of access. To this isolation must be attributed, on the one hand, the extreme credulity of the people which renders them an easy prey to quacks and *dewānias*, and on the other, their distrust of innovation and reform which retards progress in many directions. The ordinary cultivator's notion of time and distance is extremely crude. Of the witnesses that appear in court, few can tell their age within ten years of the correct figure. The low standard of intelligence, even among those who have had opportunities of being educated, is strikingly shown by the fact that it is quite exceptional to find a native of the district in Government employment of any kind. The clerks

and *muharrirs* in Government offices are, almost without exception, imported from the more advanced districts of Bengal. Until lately, few Rangpur *zamīndārs* took any share in the management of their estates, most of them being entirely dependent on their *amla*. The people are also inclined to be indolent in their habits and there is a lamentable lack of enterprise and public spirit. The trade is largely in the hands of Marwaris and Sahas. Hardly any project comes to a head without official initiation or help—whether it be the sinking of a well or the establishment of a village school. The enervating climate and the natural fertility of the soil, which makes small demands on human labour, are probably responsible for this state of things.

The natives of the district possess strong domestic instincts, but among the lower classes there is much room for improvement in the status of women. Among the Muhammadans, in consequence of the prevalence of polygamy and the numerical deficiency* of women, a substantial price has to be paid for every bride. The scarcity of the marriage market gives rise to numerous cases of abduction, fictitious divorces and re-marriages of a more or less bigamous character. These remarks apply not only to the inferior strata of the Muhammadan population but also to some of the lower Hindu castes.

There is of course another side to the picture. The people are generally good-natured, charitable, patient and sociable. Hindus and Muhammadans of the cultivating classes regard each other with the most complete toleration. They converse freely and until lately attended the religious festivals of either sect with great impartiality. Even now, it is not uncommon for them to apply mutually to the deities or saints of the other religion when they imagine that application to their own will prove ineffectual. They are usually peaceful and law-abiding. Out of the courts, that is to say when not tutored by *mukhtears* and *dewānias*, they are generally truthful in the main, though prone to exaggeration. Thrift is now hardly one of their virtues, but it is more in evidence among the Hindus than among the Muhammadans. Vanity is a common failing with the latter. Most Muhammadan *jotedārs* take a pride in making it known for how many generations their family have not followed the plough; and often the maintenance of a pony and, sometimes, an elephant is considered an indispensable adjunct of the dignity of even a petty tenure-holder. On the other hand, the Muhammadans are generally more intelligent, enterprising and energetic than the Rājbansis.

The people of the southern *parganas*, where the sway of the Musalman invaders was most complete and where it lasted longest are to this day more timid, distrustful and ignorant than the inhabitants of the rest of the district. Dr. Grierson,† who made a study of the ballads and folk-lore of the district, observed that the popular songs of the south were either meaningless or of the obscene erotic type; while those of the north showed more religious and patriotic spirit.

* According to the Census of 1901 there were 708,105 Muhammadan male and 663,325 females.

† J. A. S. B., 1877, Vol XLVI, p. 186.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

Climate.

The district has always had an unenviable reputation for unhealthiness. In the days of Mughal rule, the Muhammadan officers migrated every year to Murshidabad during the rainy season. Dr. Buchanan, who visited the district in 1809, found that fever was very prevalent, but he attributed this to bad or insufficient food, clothing and lodging, and not to the natural unhealthiness of the district. He noticed that the classes, who indulged most in spirituous liquor, were least prone to disease, though they were the most indigent. At the present day, too, Rangpur cannot be classed among the healthy districts of the province Its unhealthiness is due, in the first place, to the heavy rainfall combined with an imperfect natural drainage, which is further obstructed by innumerable roads. This makes the climate damp and malarious. During the last quinquennium the mortality was lowest in the years 1907 and 1908, when the rainfall was most deficient and highest in 1909, when the rainfall was most abundant. The second cause of unhealthiness is the insanitary habits and surroundings of the people. In addition to the stagnant marshes and swamps which disfigure the country, every village and town site is honeycombed with innumerable pits and hollows, excavated to provide earth for the plinths of houses. Bamboo, reed and straw being the chief materials with which dwellings are constructed, they are never dry in the rains and do not afford sufficient shelter in the winter. The houses are ill-ventilated, dark and hemmed in with fences. The jungle which is allowed to grow near dwellings for the purposes of conservancy, and the immense number of bamboo and other plantations, which grow within and around the villages, prevent a free circulation of air; and the evil is greatly increased by the falling of leaves in March and April, which, rotting with the first showers of rain, taint the atmosphere with putridity. In the matter of food and clothing also, the elements of hygiene are generally unknown or ignored.

The unhealthiness of the district is not shared by the town of Rangpur. Thanks chiefly to the partial silting of the *bhīls* to the north, the climate has improved considerably in recent years. The returns for the quinquennium ending in 1908 show that Rangpur is the healthiest headquarters town, save one, in the division, the average death-rate being 19·9 per mille as compared with the average of 24·1 for all towns in the province, and of 31·7 per mille for both urban and rural areas The introduction of drainage works, which are at present in contemplation, will, it is expected, give it an even better record in the future.

The climate of the district is not uncongenial to Europeans provided the conditions of a high and dry house, temperate habits and regular physical exercise are fulfilled.

VITAL STATISTICS.

It is not possible to generalise with any assurance on the vital statistics collected in the district, as they do not extend further back than 1892, and because the agency employed is not by any means perfect. Under the present system the duty of reporting births and deaths, except in the town of Rangpur, where registration is compulsory, is imposed on the village *chaukidār*, who is usually an illiterate person. He is required to report once a week to the police all births and deaths (and the causes of deaths) that occur in his beat; the police submit monthly returns to the Civil Surgeon, by whom the statistics for the district are compiled. These figures make no pretensions to absolute accuracy, and particularly those that relate to the classification of diseases. But, taken in the aggregate, they afford a useful basis for estimating and comparing the development of population in different areas, the healthiness or unhealthiness of different years, and the prevalence of the various diseases.

The average death-rate according to these statistics was 31·62 per mille for the decade ending in 1902, and 33·18 per mille in the following quinquennium. During the same periods the average birth-rate was 35·82 and 39·15 per mille, respectively. The variation from year to year is rarely very marked. The highest average birth-rate exists in the thānās of Dimla (43 per mille) and Jaldhāka (39·2 per mille) and the lowest in Pirganj and Mitāpūr (32·9 and 32·4 per mille, respectively). The highest death-rate is recorded in marshy Mahiganj (42·2 per mille), in the neglected thānā of Nāgeshwari (37·30 per mille), and in the *khiyār* areas. Mortality is heaviest in the months of November, December, January, and April and lowest in February, and the monsoon months. An unsatisfactory feature in the returns is the steady rise in the death-rate from 1900 onwards, but the district does not compare unfavourably with other districts of North Bengal. For the quinquennium ending in 1908, the average mortality in the province was 31·7 per mille, in the Rajshahi Division 36·3 per mille, and in Rangpur district 34·2 per mille.

PRINCIPAL DISEASES: Malarial fever.

According to the annual returns for the decade ending in 1908, fever was by far the greatest cause of mortality, accounting for 29·23 per mille. It is probable that the *chaukidār* returns as fever many diseases which ought to have been classed otherwise, but allowing for this fact, there can be no doubt that a very great proportion of the deaths in the district must be ascribed to malaria. On the prevalence of this disease and the different types found in the district, Dr. T. H. Bonnar, the Civil Surgeon, writes as follows:—

"The general level of the district is low, especially in the south and east, where the whole country is submerged in the rains the village sites standing out here and there as islands. The

country is ill-drained and large swamps and marshes occupy the depressions left in the deserted courses of old rivers. The soil of the district is not adapted to the excavation of tanks, and those that exist are shallow and full of vegetation. Moreover, almost every villager has at his very door a pit or pool of some kind from which he has taken the earth to raise the foundations of his huts. The condition of these tanks and pools is indescribably insanitary; they receive the surface drainage of the village and are generally used for bathing in and washing utensils and clothes. The marshes, tanks and pools form suitable breeding-places for mosquitoes and their mephitic exhalations poison the atmosphere. These circumstances account for the widespread prevalence of malaria. The fever death-rate in the decade from 1893 to 1902 stood at 28·6 per mille, in the quinquennium from 1900 to 1904 it was 29 per mille, and in the succeeding quinquennium it rose further to 30·6 per mille. Although these figures probably include many cases, that ought to come under other heads, such as pneumonia, tubercle and other febrile diseases, there can be no doubt that malaria levies a very heavy toll on the population and that its ravages show a tendency to increase.

"The commonest forms of malarial fever are the simple tertian and quartan, which prevail throughout the year, but most extensively after the rains and during the winter months, when the sudden setting in of wet and dewy nights affects the badly-housed and insufficiently clothed people. These simpler forms of fever are apt to recur repeatedly from fatigue, exposure and chill, and when insufficiently treated with quinine, frequently terminate fatally in ill-nourished and debilitated subjects. The practice of starving a fever is carried to unreasonable lengths and often produces exhaustion and heart failure. Head symptoms occasionally develop with a high temperature during the moist and steamy months at the close of the rains, when, from their situation amidst bamboo groves, jute fields and high jungle, the houses of the people are deprived of a free perflation of pure air. This humid and stifling atmosphere also causes or accentuates the depression and debility after fever. The ignorance of the people in regard to sanitary clothing and their poverty, which does not permit a sufficient period of rest and recoupment after illness, are also largely responsible for the heavy fever mortality.

"The malignant type of quotidian and tertian fever makes its appearance usually in the winter months. There is also a very deadly form of fever that, clinically, is marked by a double daily rise in temperature and is associated with enlarged liver and spleen, progressive anæmia and weakness, and bowel complaint of a dysenteric nature. It is not influenced by quinine and is possibly due to Leishman Donovan bodies."

Cholera.

Cholera is endemic throughout the year, but assumes an epidemic form twice a year, viz., from April to June, and from

November to January. The mortality is, however, rarely high During the decade ending 1902 it amounted to one per mille, and during the decade ending in 1908 to 1·2 per mille. The insanitary habits of the people are largely responsible for the propagation of the disease, if not for its original outbreak. The same water is frequently used for washing, bathing and drinking; tanks, wells and watering-ghats are not protected from pollution; no precautions are taken against flies when cholera cases occur in the neighbourhood and corpses are often thrown into the rivers. Thus an isolated case frequently infects many members of the locality. Imported fish, in a more or less decomposed condition, is highly appreciated and largely consumed; milk, which is scarce, is freely adulterated; and it is the general custom to eat rice cooked overnight on the following morning after mixing it with cold water. These practices give rise to bowel complaints which predispose the consumers to cholera. The town of Rangpur, however, has been singularly free from any serious outbreak of this disease.

Other diseases and infirmities.

Among the other most prevalent diseases are rheumatic affections, dysentery and lung diseases, with asthma as a very common symptom. The statistics of the mortality from these diseases are imperfect as many cases falling under these categories are returned as fevers. Skin-diseases, intestinal worms and goitre are also very common. The average number of goitre cases treated in the district annually is over 5,000, but this figure is no indication of the extent to which the disease prevails. It affects chiefly the women of the district, and especially Rājbansi women. A disease peculiar to the district is that known as "*ainhum*," in which the toes of the feet become inflamed and eventually drop off. The cause is obscure, but as it occurs chiefly among the agricultural working classes, it has probably some connection with the soil. Insanity is remarkably common, and it was found, at the census of 1901, that 83 out of every 100,000 males and 75 out of every 100,000 females were insane. No other district in Bengal and in Eastern Bengal, except Jalpaiguri and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, has a greater proportion of insanes. It would appear that Mongoloid races as a whole are far more prone to insanity than the Dravidian, and the Koch tribe suffers more than any other.* In many cases that have come under observation, however, the infirmity has been traced to the *gānja* habit The number of deaf-mutes was ascertained at the same census to be 100 males and 66 females per 100,000 in each case.

Leprosy is not common, only 94 males and 24 females out of every 100,000 being returned as suffering from the disease. Blindness is less prevalent than elsewhere, and only 86 males and 66 females out of every 100,000 were found to suffer from this infirmity. Night-blindness, however, is a common affliction among

* E. A. Gait, Census of Bengal, 1901, p. 202.

the poorer classes who live on the sparest diet and rarely use fatty food. Coolies from Behar and the Upper Provinces, who stint themselves in order to take their savings home, develop this infirmity largely.

VACCINATION.

Vaccination is compulsory within the municipal limits of Rangpur. With the exception of a few localities, the people are not averse to the operation. Objections are raised chiefly in the case of infants, for whom the operation is regarded as too severe, and of old women, who look on it as unnecessary at their time of life. The females of the better classes are generally reluctant to receive the lymph at the hands of male vaccinators. During the quinquennium ending in 1908-09, the average annual number of persons successfully vaccinated was 70,211, representing 32·59 per thousand of the population. The average annual number of deaths from small-pox during the same period was 765 representing 36 in 100,000 of the population.

MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS.

The oldest charitable medical institution in the district is the Rangpur Dispensary, established in 1847. In 1872, there were six dispensaries, which treated altogether 199 in-door and 18,459 out-door patients At the present day Rangpur is better provided with medical relief than any other district in North Bengal ; there are 26 charitable dispensaries, of which eleven were started within the last ten years. Of these seven are entirely maintained by private individuals, 17 by the District Board, and two jointly by the Rangpur Municipality and the District Board. These dispensaries are situated at Bādarganj, Batāshan, Betgāri, Bhitarband, Chatnai, Chilmāri, Dimla, Domār, Gaibanda, Jaldhāka, Kākina, Kishoreganj, Kūndi, Kurigrām, Mahiganj, Mithāpūkur, Nilphamāri, Palāshbāri, Pīrganj, Rangpur (Nawābganj), Sadullapur, Saghātta, Saptāna (Lalmonirhāt), Sundarganj, Tushbhāndar and Ulipur. The Rangpur Dispensary has accommodation for 50 in-door patients (40 male and 10 female) and the dispensaries at the sub-divisional headquarters and Ulipur also have accommodation for a few in-door patients ; the rest afford out-door relief only. The popularity of these institutions is steadily on the increase and, according to the returns for the quinquennium ending in 1904, the average annual number of in-patients treated was 1,486 and of out-patients 141,691.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

Formation of the land

Rangpur is a vast alluvial plain, without marked elevations of any kind. There is, probably, no district which is better watered by rivers, and there is practically no part of it which has not, at one time or another, been subjected to the processes of denudation and deposit. In historical times the Tīsta has visited every part of the northern sub-division and has left traces of its movements in numerous marshes, sandbanks and dry channels; and throughout the district the nature of the soil and the undulating contour of the country give unmistakeable evidence of river action. The rich arable tract of country in the south between Ghorāghat and Gaibandha was formerly, according to local tradition, the bed of an enormous river, larger than the modern Ganges, and the tradition receives corroboration from the account of Bakhtyār Khiljī's expedition in 1203 A.D.* The red clay tracts, along the west border of the district, which contain *kankar* or nodules of carbonate of lime, are evidently the deposits of an ancient calcium-bearing river from the western Himalayas. At the present day the strong and impetuous rivers that debouch from the Himalayas, finding no resistance in the friable soil, carry on the work of destruction and reformation. At every turn in their course the rivers pull down the opposing bank and build new land on the other side. Wherever a depression offers an opening, a branch is detached, to pursue an independent career or to rejoin the parent stream, with added volume from the inland drainage. In the monsoons, these rivers, swollen with melted snows and rain, break through their bonds and spread over the surrounding country bearing with them rich gifts of silt.

The process of diluvion and reformation, in the case of the Brahmaputra, has been well described by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, who observes as follows :—" The islands of the Brahmaputra and its low banks are undergoing constant changes. Wherever its current is directed against their sandy sides, they are undermined and swept away. But as the force of the current is always confined to a small portion of the channel, the sand thus carried away is deposited the moment it happens to escape out of the most rapid parts of the stream; and this deposition increases rapidly whenever, from the accumulation of sand, the stream is more completely diverted to other parts. The sand is often so rapidly deposited that it rises almost level with the inundation, and in such cases must always continue barren. In general, however, when the

* Vide *ante*, p. 26, *op cit.*

water over newly-formed sand becomes entirely stagnant, the clay and earth that are held in suspension in the muddy stream immediately subside. This, however, does not often happen in the first year; at least the quantity of silt then deposited is usually small, and only enables tamarisks and reeds to take root, which they do with astonishing vigour, and give some degree of stability to the new land. The quantity of soil deposited in three or four years is usually sufficient to render the soil fit for cultivation, and to raise it to within a foot or two of the level of the floods. It is evident that a deposition from the river can never raise it higher, although the dust collected by the wind around bushes raises some few spots a few inches above the high water-mark. The surface, however of these islands and banks is by no means level but undulating, so that some parts are nearly on a level with the surface of the water in the highest floods, while others are covered to a depth of twenty feet Nor can this occasion wonder, if we consider the irregular manner in which the deposit must take place, owing to differences in the stillness of the various parts of the water. Subsequent flood, if continued for ages, would no doubt bring the whole to a level, by gradually depositing much mud where the depth of the water was great, and none where the soil had risen to the level of high water-mark. But time is, perhaps, nowhere allowed for such tedious operations, and there are probably very few spots in these inundated parts that have continued for a century without having been swept away."

Fertility.

The alluvial origin of the soil, the annual reinforcement of silt from inundations, and the copious and regular rainfall explain the remarkable fertility of the soil in Rangpur. Much of the cultivated land in the central and southern parts of the district consists of old marshes and river-beds, where the soil has a considerable admixture of clay, enriched by accumulations of decayed vegetation. In the north and east, the soil is a sandy loam, consisting of alluvium of more or less recent formation. The higher lands which are beyond the reach of inundations are less fertile than the lower, which receive frequent layers of silt, from the Tīsta, Dharla and Brahmaputra. The *detritus* of these rivers, having their source in the Bhutan hills, which consist largely of magnesia rocks, is not as rich in plant-food, as that which is brought down by the Ganges and Jumūna from the phosphatic and calcic rocks of the Sewalik ranges. The *chars* formed by the Tīsta, Dharla and Brahmaputra in the north, that is, nearer their source, consist of the heavier particles of sand and are not cultivable for several years. But the fine silt, precipitated on lands in the interior by inundations, contains much organic matter, and the *chars*, formed by the Brahmaputra in its lower reaches, the banks of small rivers and streams in the interior, and the lands around *bhils* are extremely fertile for the same reason. The stiff red clay in the *khiyār* tracts, yields ordinarily one crop—a bumper crop of rice, which is sown at the

height of the rains. At other times the land possesses no subsoil moisture and is too hard to be worked profitably. There are thus two main classes of soil, *viz.*, the loamy or *poli*, in which the proportion of sand and clay varies according to age and situation; and the red clay or *khiyār*. The *poli* soils possess great recuperative power and are not easily exhausted. About 60 per cent. of the cultivated area is cropped more than once, and the outturn per acre compares very favourably with that of other districts.

Rainfall. The seasonableness of the rainfall is as important as its quantity. Moderate and intermittent rain is needed from February to April for the ploughing of rice and jute lands, but abundant rains in February and March would damage mustard and other winter (*rabi*) crops which are then in seed. Heavy precipitation is necessary in April and May, when winter rice is transplanted. In a successful year the monsoons should begin in June and last till September, with frequent intervals of fine weather at the beginning to allow of weeding operations and to enable rice seedlings to keep their heads above water. Ideal weather in July and August is an alternation of fine and rainy days, but a deficient fall in these months is fatal to the *aus* crop. Smart showers in October are very beneficial to the winter rice crop, as it helps to swell out the grain. September and October rains are useful to the cultivator preparing high lands for the *rabi* crops, which also need rain when they flower in December.

Irrigation. The abundant and regular rainfall enables the cultivator to do without irrigation. The soil also, except in the *khiyār* tracts, retains much moisture throughout the year and water can be reached 5 or 6 feet below the surface. In the *khiyār* area, the rayat might with advantage resort to artificial irrigation to obtain a second crop from his lands, but his physique or his will is not equal to this effort. The only crop irrigated to any extent is tobacco. The water is obtained from temporary wells sunk in the fields, or scooped out of pits; and, when a water-course or stream is within convenient distance, a bamboo lever arrangement is employed to draw up the water, which is distributed to the plants along shallow trenches.

Manure. Manure is in general use only in the cultivation of the more valuable crops, such as sugar-cane, tobacco, jute, oilseeds and *pān*. The material used is cow-dung and oil-cake, either singly or mixed together in the proportion of three parts of the former to one part of the latter; and decaying vegetable matter, obtained from the marshes and rivers. Eighteen to twenty maunds of cow-dung, if used alone, is considered a liberal allowance for a bigha of land, that is, roughly, a third of an acre. For sugar-cane, as much as 15 maunds of oil-cake is sometimes applied per acre, and in *pān* gardens ten maunds of oil-cake mixed with earth. Cow-dung, house-refuse, consisting principally of ashes, and

decaying vegetable matter from the swamps, is principally used for tobacco and oil-seeds, but the cultivator usually relies on his own resources and will not to undergo any pecuniary outlay for manuring these crops. The only other methods employed for invigorating the soil are burning jungle or stubble on it—a common practice—or allowing it to lie fallow, which is rarely done, except in the case of ginger and turmeric, when the fields are allowed to lie waste (*khil*) for two or more years. A regular system of rotation of crops is pursued by the rayats: mustard is grown after jute and then paddy; tobacco is followed by paddy and occasionally by jute; sugar-cane is grown on the same land for two years, and then paddy or jute is the usual crop.

Blights.

Blights are of frequent occurrence in Rangpur, but fortunately they are only partial in their operation and rarely destroy a crop entirely. *Aus* paddy is attacked by a kind of stem-borer known as *pār* or *malgandhi*, which cuts the roots of the plants, and by a beetle known as *gazra*. Winter paddy is a attacked by a malodorous insect called *gandhi* (Liptocorisa actua), which sucks the sap of the growing plant, and by hairy caterpillars (*ācha*) which do much damage. This paddy also suffers from a disease known as *jaindhāra* (Hispa aenecens?). Jute is attacked by hairy caterpillars, of which the Spilosoma is one. The great enemies of tobacco are caterpillars (*poka, āhi*) of the cutworm variety (Agrotis ypsilon) as well as the leaf-eating (Prodinia littoralis). A parasitic plant known as *bhulki* (Orobanche indica) also causes much damage; it grows on the roots of the plant, which, robbed of its sap, loses in growth and vigour. Potatoes and mustard suffer from the same insect pests as tobacco. The former are also liable to a red rot which stains the flesh, and imported varieties succumb to this disease more readily than the native ones. Sugar-cane is commonly attacked by a moth-borer (Chilosimplex, F. Pyralidle), locally known as *majra poka* and by red rot of fungoid origin (Tripchosphœria) which discolours the flesh. The *kalai* pulse is liable to a serious insect pest, known as the Behar hairy caterpillar (Diacrisia obliqua) which sometimes, as in 1870, destroys the whole crop. Ginger is attacked by a fungoid disease known as *jaindhāra* (Pythium gracile) which rots the tuber, and by the white fly maggot of Calobata, locally known as *pokadhāra*, which tunnels in the rhyzome of the growing plants. The mangoes of the district are ruined by a small weevil (Cryptorhynchus mangiferae, F. Cuculionidæ), which lays its eggs on the flower and pupates inside the fruit. It lives on the kernel while the mango is growing and tunnels its way out, through the plup, when it ripens.* The cultivator possesses no means of combating or eradicating these various pests and submits to them passively. The visits of locusts have in recent

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* This account of the blights prevailing in the district is based mainly on a note by Babu Jamini Kumar Biswas, B.A., Superintendent of the Burhat Government Farm.

years been rare, and on no occasion has the damage done been widely felt.

Destructive animals.

The chief animal foe of the cultivator is the wild pig, who infests the jungle in the *chars* and low-lying areas, and consumes large quantities of paddy. Wild duck and the purple coot (*kaim*) also do considerable damage to this crop in the *bhil* areas. Field and water rats are responsible for much mischief, and jackals and foxes are extremely partial to sugar-cane. The green and red-headed parakeets commit great havoc in fruit gardens and maize fields.

Soils.

The soils of the district may be classified as (1) *poli*, (2) *khiyār* (3) *matiyāl* and (4) *bāla*. The first is a mixture of soft sand and clay—the sand preponderating—which produces all kinds of crop; the second is a mixture of sand and hard stiff clay—the latter preponderating—which is only suitable for winter rice; the third is a dark, heavy, clayey soil, and the fourth is mostly sand. *Poli* lands yield two crops a year, of which one at least is rice; *khiyār* lands produce only one crop, *viz.*, *āman* rice; the *matiyāl* soils produce both *kharīf* (winter rice, *tīl*, etc.) and *rabi* (cold weather) crops, while *bāla* lands yield ginger, turmeric and motha (Cyperus rotundus). The loam on the best lands is only 3 or 4 feet deep; below that is pure sand. Besides this classification, there is also the general division of lands into four classes according to quality, *viz.*, *awāl* or first class, which will grow anything; *dōyam* or second class and *sāyam* or third class, which are intermediate qualities; and *chahāram* or fourth class, which will hardly grow anything at all. A third classification is according to the number of crops the land will grow Thus *ek khanda* lands are those which will produce only one crop in the year, and *dō khanda*, which will produce two. In a district, where the rivers are continually changing their courses and forming new land by alluvial deposits, the distinction between *kaim* or permanent, and *charabhānga* and *bāla char* lands is important. The difference is only one of degree as all lands in the district have been broken away and redeposited by the rivers at one time or another. The term *kaim*, therefore, means land which has not been broken away for many years; and *char* lands are those which have been formed within a generation or two. When a *char* is thoroughly cleared of jungle and the trees on it have reached a considerable size, it is said to have become a *kaim char*. Similarly, a distinction is made between high lands (*dānga*) and lowlands (*dola*), but the former expression is ordinarily applied to waste uplands Lands occupied by houses and the adjoining compound and garden land are known as *bāstu* or *palān*; when these lands are brought under cultivation they are known as *utbāstu*.

PRINCIPAL CROPS.

The principal crops, in order of importance are (1) winter rice (*āman*, *haimāntik*), (2) autumn rice (*aus*, *bhādoi*), (3) jute (*pāt*, *koshta*), (4) rape and mustard, (5) tobacco, (6) pulses, (7) potatoes and (8) sugar-cane.

Winter rice.

The normal area under winter rice is 826,000 acres, or considerably more than half the total cultivated area. There are two species *viz.*, *rūpa* (transplanted) and *būna* (sown broad-cast). The transplanted species is first sown in nurseries or seed-beds, for which rich high ground, generally near the houses of the villagers, is chosen. The early varieties are sown in February or March, the later in May or June. After a month or two, when the seedlings are about a foot high, and the early rains have moistened the soil, they are gradually transplanted into low lands covered by about ten inches of water. In the eastern part of the district, the transplantation is sometimes made twice, the first being on high and dry soil. This practice is said to render the plants more hardy and to save seed, the shoots from a single grain being often divided into several plants. Seedlings of the earlier variety are planted wide apart, as they expand into thick clumps with many shoots. Plenty of water is needed in the fields, which are therefore levelled and enclosed in ridges, called *ails*, so as the better to retain rainfall. The plant, however, is likely to be damaged, if totally submerged for more than three or four days. Both varieties of transplanted rice ripen in December or January. The ripe ears are cut with sickles and arranged on threshing-floors in circles, the stalks being outside, and two or four pairs of cattle are employed to tread them out. The straw is then well shaken, the grain winnowed, dried in the sun for a day or two and stored in *golās*, and the straw put up in stacks The principal varieties grown are *sail jashoā* (fine), *kotra* (coarse), *rosāl bhog*, *kārtic sāl*, and *samrās* (which yields very good *khai* or popped-corn).

The broad-cast species of winter rice is not extensively grown. It is sown in the beds of marshes and rivers from February to April and reaped in November to January This rice is frequently sown in the same field with *aus* rice. The growth of the plant keeps pace with the rising of the water in the rainy season, the stem frequently growing to a length of 12 feet The principal varieties are *belo*, *kānsha* and *kāndo shao*.

Winter rice-lands are ploughed three or four times and harrowed two or three times before sowing or transplanting. Several villagers often combine to use all their ploughs and oxen together and in rotation in their lands. This arrangement is known as *gāta*. A single pair of bullocks can plough about one-sixth of an acre and harrow about two-thirds of an acre in a day. About a maund of seed is needed for every acre, and the average outturn is 20 maunds of paddy or 14 maunds of cleaned rice. The straw makes very good fodder and finds a ready market.

Autumn rice.

Autumn rice normally occupies an area of 282,500 acres or one-third the area under winter rice. Three species are recognised, *viz.*, (*a*) *kainān*, grown on rich high lands, from which crops of sugar-cane, tobacco and mustard have been obtained; (*b*) common *aus*, which grows on lands of medium elevation from which a crop of winter rice has been obtained; and (*c*) *jāli*, grown on low

moist soils in the beds of rivers and marshes. Winter rice is often sown on the same land and at the same time with *jāli*; the former rice springs up after the removal of the *jāli* crop, being brought forward by the rains. The varieties of each species are innumerable. In the neighbourhood of Rangpur town, the coarse varieties of *kaināṅ* are known as *gariā, chapāl dumra, ghusir* and *chhiton dumra*; the fine varieties are *sona mail, khāgri* and *lakhi bilāsh*. The chief varieties of *jāli* are *amlai, gota dumra, kayera* and *dhāriya*. The *jāli* species is sown earliest, from January to March; ordinary *aus*, from February to March; and *kaināṅ* in April and May. Ordinary *aus* and *kaināṅ* ripen in four months, *jāli* in five.

Aus rice-land receives from three to five ploughings before it is ready to receive the seed and two ploughings after sowing, the second of these two being in a transverse direction to the first. The harrow (*mai*) is passed over the fields after each ploughing and, where necessary, the clods are broken with a mallet (*kursi*). The plants are thinned out with a grubber (*bida*) and when they are about a foot high, the crop is weeded twice. An acre of land can be weeded by 18 men in a day. The average outturn is 14 maunds of paddy or ten maunds of cleaned rice per acre. The straw is of little value and is often burnt down or ploughed into the ground. After the *aus* crop has been harvested, a cold-weather crop of mustard, potato or pulse is grown on the lands which are dry, and of winter rice on the lands which are still moist. In most cases the tenant retains the *aus* rice for his own consumption and meets his rent and other expenses by the sale of his *āman* rice and cold-weather crops.

Other cereals.

The other cereals grown in the district are unimportant. Wheat occupies 3,000 acres; barley, 500; maize, 200; and millets, known as *chīna* and *kaun*, 200.

Jute.

Rangpur is noted both for the quality and quantity of its jute cultivation. The normal area under this crop is 288,700 acres, which is exceeded by no other district in the province, except Mymensingh. The plant, which needs a fairly high soil with a good proportion of sand, thrives well throughout the *poli* portion of the district and especially on the islands and banks of the Tista and Brahmaputra. It is sown in April and May and cut in August, September and early October. The land is ploughed and harrowed five or six times before it receives the seed, which is sown broad-cast, once lengthwise and then cross-wise. Three seers of seed to the acre is used. The crop is weeded when the plants are about nine inches high, and sometimes again when they are two feet high. Each field is weeded in a single day, as the plants thrive so fast after the weeding that the slightest delay causes an unevenness of growth. Excessive rain injures the crop, and superfluous water has to be drained off by channels cut across the fields. The plants cease to grow any higher when they branch

out at the top and commence to flower; they are then cut with sickles, tied into bundles (*ātis*) and steeped in water in heaps (*jāg*), in order to decompose. Still water is preferred to flowing water, as it becomes heated more rapidly. After the bundles have been in the water for three days, they are further depressed by plantain trees, clods and pieces of turf being placed on them. Decomposition is complete in a fortnight. The bundles are then taken out, and the fibre detached from the stem. This is effected by beating the plants on the water The fibre is thoroughly washed, squeezed out and hung out to dry on bamboo staging for a day or two. It is then twisted into large skeins (*āti*) and is ready for sale. The average outturn is 15 maunds per acre. In recent years there has been a phenomenal increase in jute cultivation. The principal varieties of jute grown are:— (*a*) *dēshi* or *jāl pāt* (Corchorus capsularis); (*b*) *pārbatia* (Corchorus olitorius) and (*c*) *meshta* (Hibiscus cannabinus). The first variety is either early (*hewti*) or late (*betri*), and it may be either white or reddish in colour. This yields the best fibre. The *pārbatia* is a reddish variety and is grown on a very small scale; the fibre is stronger, but its selling value is discounted by its greater specific gravity. It is largely used for making twine and rope. The *meshta* variety is very coarse and is used to adulterate the superior jute; but in former times the best native paper was made of this fibre. This species grows to a height of 15 feet, while other varieties rarely exceed 10 feet.

Rhea

The only other fibre produced is *kānkhura* or china grass (Rhea) which grows wild in parts of the district, and especially on the *chars* of the Brahmaputra The fibre is strong and durable, and is chiefly used for making fishing nets.

Mustard and rapeseed.

The normal area under rape and mustard (*sarisha*) is 198,800 acres. In this respect also Rangpur holds the second place in the province. The crop is sown in October and November and cut in February or March. The land requires to be well manured, and ploughed and harrowed eight times before sowing. It is generally sown as a second crop on *aus* lands, sometimes alone and sometimes on high lands, along with the *musūri* pulse. When the plants are in flower, the large patches of yellow present a vivid and pleasing contrast to the surrounding green in the fields. The outturn varies from 5 maunds per acre in the *khiyār* tracts to 8 maunds on *char* lands, where it thrives best. The chief varieties grown are known as *kāla sarisha*, *senta* or *tora*, *māghi* and *deshi sarisha*.

Til.

The only other oil-seed cultivated to any extent is *tīl* or gingelly (*Sesamum indicum*). The principal variety grown is the *krishna*. The area under this crop is 1,400 acres.

Tobacco.

After rice, jute and mustard, tobacco is the most important crop in the district—the normal area devoted to it being 194,000 acres, which is quite half the total tobacco cultivation of the

province. It is not known when the cultivation of this plant which has been a staple of the district for more than a century, was introduced. The Muhammadan historians do not refer to it as one of the products though they mention silk, and till the beginning of the 19th century, opium was the only narcotic to which the people were addicted. One opinion is that "the similarity which the Bengali *tamacoo* bears to the Portuguese tobacco seems to give the credit of having introduced this plant to that nation.*" One of the varieties grown is known as "*noakhāli*"—the name of a district where the Portuguese † were particularly active. It is probable that the industry did not attain large dimensions till indigo cultivation became general. Indigo refuse provided a cheap and excellent manure for tobacco fields. In 1790 some Virginian seed was sent by Government and distributed among the rayats, but the result of the experiment is not recorded. Havana, American, Grecian and Turkish seed have been experimented with on various occasions with promising results. In 1867 a zamīndār sent superior samples of Havana leaf to the Paris Exhibition and was awarded a medal and certificate.

The crop is grown extensively in the neighbourhood of Rangpur town and in a north-west, south and east direction from it, and along both banks of the Tīsta. The plant courts a rich sandy loam, and does not take kindly to a damp clay soil. The seed is sown in nurseries in August and September, and transplanted into fields from October to the middle of December. The land is previously well manured with cow-dung and house-sweepings, and it requires to be ploughed ten or twelve times and worked very fine before it is fit to receive the seedlings The plants are placed in parallel rows from 2 to 3 feet apart and the same space is allowed between the plants in the rows. This chess-board arrangement facilitates the use of the *nirāni* (rake) and *pāson* (hand-hoe) in keeping down weeds and stirring the surface soil. The rake is drawn up and down the rows and then crosswise, and the process has to be repeated till the leaves are large enough to keep down the jungle. After eight or ten large leaves have formed, the side and centre shoots are nipped off, the object being not only to obtain a larger leaf but also one of better quality, as all the sap of the plant is delivered to the reserved leaves. In February or March, the leaves arrive at maturity, that is, they change from a green to a yellowish hue and become brittle. They are then cut off and spread on the ground and allowed to wither. When they have become flexible, but not too dry, they are carried under shade. Here the leaves are tied in bundles (*ihāka, hāth*) and slung on poles (*kabāri*) to dry. They are left there till they assume a light-brown colour. When perfectly dry they are taken

* Quoted in J. E. O'Connor's "*Report on the Production of tobacco in India,*" 1873.

† There were families of native Portuguese scattered over Rangpur district.—Walter Hamilton, *Description of Hindustan*, 1820, p. 212.

down and put up in bundles (*pēti*). A damp and rainy day is selected for this operation, so that the leaves may not break or get injured. The bundles are then heaped on one another so as to form a circle, the stalks outwards and the leaves spread flat. Mutual pressure and warmth, at this stage, produces a certain amount of sweating and fermentation, and the tobacco is then fit for sale.

A tobacco field needs as much care and treatment as good vegetable garden soil. It is the only crop in the district that needs irrigation and numerous temporary wells are sunk in the fields for this purpose. Great attention is needed to keep the plants free from insects known as *āhis*. The average outturn is 24 maunds per acre and the average price is now Rs. 10 per maund In recent years, the Government Experimental Farm at Būrirhāt has devoted much attention to the possibility of introducing foreign varieties, but hitherto with little prospect of success. In the first place, the soil of Rangpur imparts a certain rankness and acerbity of flavour to the leaf grown from even the best imported seed; in the second place, the foreign varieties yield a smaller leaf and therefore a smaller weight of outturn, which is not compensated for by the higher price obtainable in a hitherto uncertain and unassured market

The tobacco grown in the district is of two kinds, *viz*., (*a*) *tāmāku* or *dēshi tāmāk* (Nicotiana tabuccum) and (*b*) *hāmāku* or *bilāti tāmāk* (Nicotiana rustica). The chief varieties of the former are *godra* with a thick large leaf; *pānpata*, with a long leaf which is chewed with betel leaves; *bhelengī* and *noakhāli*, with a small leaf; *sindūr khātu* with a leaf of strong flavour. The chief varieties of *hāmāku* are *bilāti*, a small thick round leaf and *mathāri*, with a small broad and dark leaf.

Pulses.

Pulses and other food grains are grown on 189,000 acres. The chief varieties are *masūri* (Ervum lens), *khesāri* (Lathyrus sativus), *arhar* (Cajanus Indicus), *mūng* (Phaseolus mung), *kalai*, (Phaseolus radiatus) and *matar* or peas (pisum sativum). *Masuri* is generally sown in the same field with mustard, *arhar* with *aus* rice on high lands and *matar* in *āman* fields, at the close of the rainy season. Very little labour is devoted to these crops, which grow well on inferior lands. The outturn varies from 1½ to 2½ maunds per acre.

Potatoes.

The cultivation of the potato (*bilāti alu*) was introduced by the Government in 1797, in order that the population might have something to fall back on in the event of a failure of the rice crop. A hundred maunds of seed were imported from Behar and distributed among landowners and planters, but an excessive fall of rain ruined the experiment and only 19 maunds' produce was obtained. About forty years later the tuber was again introduced and took a firm hold. The area under cultivation is now about 25,000 acres and a large portion of the crop is exported to the

southern districts of the province. The land is well manured with cow-dung, house-sweepings, ashes and the decaying deposits of reed from the marshes; it also undergoes eight or ten ploughings and as many harrowings. The seed is planted in parallel lines on slight ridges which are raised as the plant grows. The crop is sown in September and October and dug up in February and March. Twelve maunds of seed are required for an acre and the outturn is about 90 maunds. The potatoes grown are of two species, the mealy and the waxy. The former is grown earlier and is of inferior quality. The chief varieties are *sāda ālu*, with white skin and flesh; *swēti*, a small tuber; and the *māldai* with red skin and flesh. The waxy species is grown later and the plant is smaller in size. The important varieties are *sīl bilāti*, the most popular—an elongated tuber with a reddish skin; *goma bilāti*, a round tuber with a thick reddish skin; *bilāti*, round and very small; *bina-thupi*, of the size of marbles; and *patāni*, large and white.

Minor tuberous crops.

Among other tuberous crops are yams and arums, of which there are several species—*ōl*, *mān*, *kachu*, and others; the sweet potato (*sek ālu*); the prickly potato (*kānta ālu*); onions and garlic; and ginger (*ādrak*) which is, perhaps, more largely grown in Rangpur (especially in the north and north-west) than in any other district of the province. A high light soil, which has lain fallow for some time, is best suited to its cultivation. The land is well manured and ploughed and the seed is placed in parallel ridges as in the case of potatoes. The root is dug up a year after sowing. The seed used and the outturn are the same as in the case of potatoes. *Haldi* or turmeric (Curcuma longa) is grown in the same way, but takes two years to mature.

Sugar-cane.

The area under sugar-cane cultivation is 20,000 acres—the same as it was forty years ago. Owing to the competition of imported sugar, the crop is no longer as valuable as it was in former years. It needs a light dry soil and is grown chiefly in the west and south of the district and in the valleys of the Jūbaneswari and Karatoya. It is planted in February and March, and cut in the following January and February, being about eleven months in the ground. The land requires eight or ten ploughings and as many harrowings. The seed is planted on ridges or mounds about a foot above the level of the field and when the young canes are three or four feet high they are tied together in bunches of eight or ten to make them remain erect. Owing to the natural moisture, the crop does not require irrigation, as it does in other parts, but it needs careful weeding and manuring. When the canes ripen, they are either used for chewing or their juice is pressed out in mills and boiled into *gūr* (unrefined sugar). The outturn is about 40 maunds of *gūr* per acre. The chief varieties grown are *venda mūkhi*, the best in the district—a whitish medium-sized cane in equal demand for *gūr* manufacture and for chewing; *āngi*

or *kāzli*, a large dark red and hard cane; *khari*, a thin and very hard cane of poor quality; and *sahebān* also known as Bombay, a good chewing cane.

BETEL.

Pān or betel leaf is extensively cultivated. A *pān* garden seldom exceeds two bighas in extent. The land is raised waist high above the level of the surrounding fields, well manured with oil-cake and closely dug. New earth is thrown on the field every year. In April or May, the roots of the old creepers are placed on ridges of earth and the garden is watered daily till the plants are three feet high, when it is enclosed and lightly roofed over with reeds and bamboos, around which the creepers entwine themselves. The leaves are eaten with areca nut and lime made from shells. Plucking commences six months after planting, but the leaves of two or three-year-old plants are preferred. The leaves sell at from 10 to 20 for a pice. The profits of a betel farm are large, and the rent proportionately high—sometimes as much as Rs. 90 per acre. Very profitable also is the cultivation of the *supāri* or betel-nut (Areca catechu), which is eaten with *pān* leaf. These palms are largely grown on homestead lands, the trees being usually planted in rows. It is said that a tree which has undergone seven transplantations is the most fruitful. The nuts are gathered between October and February.

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS.

The total area of the district is 2,225,648 acres and the area under cultivation in 1909-10 is estimated at 1,448,900 acres, that is, 65 per cent The uncultivable area is reckoned at 600,000 acres, culturable waste other than fallows at 82,000, and current fallows at 98,000 acres In the estates surveyed and settled in 1907 the percentage of cultivated to total area was found to vary from 69 to 77 per cent., and the greater part of the uncropped area was classed as culturable (chiefly fallow, groves, etc.). The higher proportion of cultivated land in these estates is explained by the fact that they lie in the *poti* tracts and do not include any *char* or *khiyār* lands.

EXTENSION OF CULTIVATION.

The area under cultivation increases year by year. The *chars* of the Brahmaputra, for which formerly no tenants could be obtained, now attract numbers of settlers from Pabna, Mymensingh and Dacca; to these hardy immigrants, known generally as *bhātias* or men from the down stream, also belongs the credit of reclaiming and bringing under the plough large areas of forest and jungle in Bāharband and Bhitarband *parganās*. The forests, which existed at Panga and Jhar Singeshwar forty years ago, have long since been cut down and cleared away. Zamīndārs, who own land in the *khiyār* tracts, encourage Santāl and Oraon settlements and much jungle land has thus been opened for cultivation. These rude immigrants rapidly acquire the agricultural arts and methods of the native population and in a few years become as good cultivators, as they are wood and jungle cutters. Lastly, a valuable part of the increased area under cultivation consists of silted marshes and the earthquake of 1897 appears to have helped

in the work of reclamation. No other district in the division possesses a larger proportionate area of cultivated land and, indeed, the general complaint is that there is not sufficient waste land for grazing cattle.

IMPROVEMENTS IN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE.

In this district, as in the rest of Eastern Bengal, there is no well-to-do and educated farmer class. *Jotedārs* and tenure-holders are merely rent-collectors. The cultivator is largely a creature of routine. His disposition to learn, as well as his opportunity, is small, and improvements in agricultural practice fail to appeal to him unless the advantage is obvious and immediate. He has adopted the cultivation of potatoes and jute and the use of the Bihiā iron mills with a readiness that is very gratifying when contrasted with his indifference in the matter of seed and manure. The ryot rarely spends any money in purchasing manure and the day is probably distant when he will be induced to use bone-meal or adopt the system of green manuring. The value of his crops would be greatly enhanced if he took pains to procure good seed or to introduce new varieties. There is much room for improvement in the tobacco, sugar-cane and ginger grown in the district. At present, for instance, most cultivators obtain their jute seed from the plants on the borders of their fields. These are usually damaged by cattle and of stunted growth. In the *khiyār* tracts, which at present yield only one crop a year, a system of irrigation appears to be urgently called for. A Government experimental farm has been in existence in the district for some years and is now located at Būrirhāt, where trial is made of new seed, new methods and new implements; there is also a district Agricultural Association, formed of landownerst and others interested in the industry, which maintains a demonstration farm at Rangpur and is intended to serve as a link between the Agricultural Department and the people. But the difficulties in the way of reaching the masses and conquering their *vis inertiae* are not easily to be overcome and progress in the domestication of new methods is very slow. The agricultural implements (and incidentally the fishing implements) in use at the present day are the same as those described by Dr. Buchanan in 1809.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

Mangoes and plantains are largely grown, but are of inferior quality. The mangoes suffer from a grub which eats into the fruit before it ripens. The plantains are generally full of seed and the people use them more as vegetable than fruit. The cultivation of *līchis* (*Nephelium litchi*) is extending and the fruit is of excellent quality. Guavas, custard-apples of two kinds (*Annona squamosa, Annona reticulata*), *bair* (*Zizyphus jujuba*), rose-apples (*jām*), jack (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), tamarind, pomegranate, *papāya*, and *bēl*, the Bengal quince (*Aegle marmelos*) are found throughout the district. Pomeloes (*Citrus decumana*) and limes are obtained in abundance from August to October, and the pine-apple (*Annanasa sativa*) grows in profusion. The cocoanut is

grown in the south of the district, but does not apparently find the soil congenial. Plantations of the areca palm (*supāri*) are very profitable and are grown on high lands near villages.

Among vegetables, the *baigūn* or egg-plant (*Solanum melongena*) thrives well in garden soil and is extensively consumed by the natives. Two crops are cultivated in the year,—an early crop gathered from December to February, and a late crop gathered from May to July. Among other common vegetables may be mentioned potatoes, radishes (*mula*), turnips (*salgrām*), several varieties of beans (*sīm*) and of spinach (*sāg*), cucumber, turmeric, ginger, onions, sweet potatoes, gourds and pumpkins. The safflower (*kusūm*) is largely consumed as a vegetable; a dye is extracted from the leaves of this plant and an oil from the seed.' Cauliflowers, cabbages of two varieties (*ōl kopi, bāndha kopi*), beet, carrots (*gājar*), tomatoes and melons are grown in a few gardens. A large arum (*kochu*) which thrives in rich damp soil, is extensively grown.

The growing of fruits and garden vegetables is not, however, taken up seriously as an industry. No special care is given to their cultivation nor is any regard paid to the selection of good varieties.

Cattle.

The cattle bred in the district are small and rarely exceed four feet in height. Their stunted growth is due principally to the want of grazing land which is increasingly felt as cultivation advances. During the rains beaten straw is in many places the only provender available. Another cause is the total absence of any systematic breeding. The District Board has imported two stud bulls which are sent on tour throughout the district, but the people are indifferent and their services are in little demand. The best cattle and oxen in the district are those imported from Behar and the Upper Provinces, and sold at the *melās* held throughout the district in the cold weather. Buffaloes are comparatively few in number and, except on the *chars* of the Brahmaputra which afford good pasture, not of a very good kind. They are reared in large numbers on the *chars*, and are also imported from Purnea and other Behar districts. Horses are neither plentiful nor good of their kind. Bhutia ponies are still brought down from the hills, but not to such an extent as formerly nor of so good a class, better markets being now met with further north. Sheep are reared for food by Muhammadans, and goats are abundant.

The price of a country-bred cow is about Rs 20 and of a pair of bullocks Rs. 40; in the case of imported animals the price is quite double. A pair of buffaloes costs Rs. 60 and a country-bred pony of 12 hands Rs. 30, while a full-grown goat can be had for Rs. 5.

Poultry.

The poultry of the district is generally of a very inferior type. The common fowl (*murghī*) is reared by Muhammadans and ducks (*hāns*) by both Hindus and Muhammadans. The former is a leggy bird with a small body and of poor flavour. Geese (*rājhāns*) are very common and a full-sized bird can be had for a rupee or two.

Veterinary relief.

There is a Veterinary Dispensary and hospital at Rangpur, in charge of a Veterinary Assistant, at which 37 in-patients and 577 out-patients were treated in 1909-10. Of the animals treated 68 were equines, 422 bovines and 104 others. The Veterinary Assistant also goes into the interior to attend to outbreaks of contagious and infectious disease and treated 369 cases in 73 villages in this way in 1909-10. The most prevalent epidemic disease is rinderpest, which was responsible for 458 deaths in the same year.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

The district is not ordinarily liable to natural calamities of any magnitude. There is rarely a serious deficiency or excess of rainfall, and the crops are not extensively affected by blights. Rangpur has not for many years been reached by the cyclones which originate in the Bay of Bengal. But the district appears to lie within the zone of seismic activity and against this peril, unfortunately, little or no precaution can be taken.

FLOODS. The district is liable to floods, but the occasions, on which they have caused any very serious injury to the crops during the present century, are very few. The last year, in which inundation resulted in actual famine was 1787-88. An account of the great flood and subsequent calamities of that year will be found on a subsequent page. Floods occur when heavy rains in the Himalayan ranges to the north are supplemented by continued wet weather in the district itself. Although in 1870 the local rains are said to have been almost unprecedentedly heavy, and the rivers and water-courses were all brimful, no damage was done, and the winter rice crop of the year was an unusually fine one. The eastern part of the district which lies comparatively low, and is intersected by numerous rivers is principally subject to inundation. The largest of these rivers, the Brahmaputra, Dharla, and Tista, are continually shifting their channels, and in doing so frequently overflow the country. Unfortunately, the matter held in suspension by these rivers, and annually deposited on the land on the abatement of the floods, is a sandy silt, which sometimes remains unproductive for several years. It is the local rainfall which fertilises the soil, and on this mainly depends the productiveness of the crops. Rangpur is fortunate in its natural configuration; it has a good proportion of comparatively high as well as of low lands, with different varieties of crops growing on each. By this distribution, the injury caused by the heaviest local rainfall to the crops in the lower levels can, to a considerable extent, be counterbalanced by the increased fertility of the higher lands. The experience of this district seems to show that famine is most to be dreaded as the result of inundation, when it is the joint result of excessive local rainfall combined with the swelling of the mountain torrents to the north. As above stated, the only year in which it has been ascertained that the injury from this cause was so serious as to produce famine, was in 1787-88. About sixty years later, some heavy floods took place, but they do not appear to have seriously affected the general harvest. In 1856,

the crops on the low-lying parts of Rangpur were destroyed by inundation, but the produce of other tracts was sufficient to avert any extreme distress. In recent years there have been no destructive floods.

There are no important embankments or other protective works against floods in the district, and perhaps it is fortunate that there are none, as such works generally effect more mischief than they obviate. They prevent the river water reaching land where it may be essential that it should go, and when an emergency does occur, they generally give way to the flood, and render the violence of the pent-up water ten times more destructive than it would have been had the river been allowed to spread gradually over the whole surface of the country.

DROUGHT.

Only five cases of drought are recorded as having occurred within the last 63 years. These were in 1857-58, 1862-63, 1866-67, 1874 and 1908-09 but only on the last two occasions was the damage such as to affect seriously the general harvest of the district. In 1857-58 and 1862-63, the price of food rose greatly, and considerable distress was experienced by the poorest classes, but this was caused more by the demand from other districts and the consequent exportation of rice, than by any real deficiency in the outturn of the local crops. The Bengal scarcity of 1866 did not reach famine point in Rangpur district, although the high prices which prevailed in that year, owing to the demand from other districts, caused considerable distress and inconvenience. At the beginning of November 1866, just before the gathering of the winter rice harvest, prices were at their highest, and ordinary rice was selling at eight seers to the rupee, while the very cheapest description was as dear as $9\frac{1}{3}$ seers to the rupee. These extreme prices only lasted for a short time, and dropped immediately on the gathering in of the new crop. The scarcity never amounted to famine or rendered it necessary to invoke Government aid; and in a very few years local prices had returned to what were regarded as ordinary rates prior to 1866, if indeed they were not somewhat lower than the former rates.

Scarcity of 1874.

The following is a short account of the scarcity of 1874, condensed from Mr. A. P. MacDonnell's "*Food-Grain supply and famine relief in Behar and Bengal.*" In the year 1873 the rainfall was not only greatly deficient, it was also very unseasonably distributed. In every month the fall was considerably under the normal quantity. In July it was only one-third of the usual fall, and the rains came to a sudden end in September when a copious downpour was necessary to develop and bring to maturity the great winter crop of the year. Reviewing the condition of the rice harvest in January 1874, when it had been harvested, the Collector reported an average for the whole district of one-fifth of an average crop. The failure was greatest in the Gaibanda sub-division where only one-eighth of the crop was saved. The

district of Rangpur had suffered from no vicissitude of season in 1872. On the contrary, the rice harvest was one of the finest on record, so luxuriant, indeed, was it that the cheapness in prices which naturally resulted from the abundant supply is reported to have caused some popular discontent. The autumn rice also had fortunately yielded in 1873 a half average crop. These facts, however, were not sufficient to prevent a panic amongst the merchants and even in the first quarter of 1874 the price of rice was more than double the usual rate at that period, in spite also of considerable importations of food-grain from Cooch Behar, Assam, the districts of the Dacca division and from the adjacent parts of Bogra. In April there was a collapse in this trade and a general failure of the supplies in the markets was reported throughout the district, and mainly all down the western border, that is, in the *khiyār* tracts. Prices at the headquarters market reached Rs. 5-8-0 per maund, that is nearly four times the normal rates at that time of the year; in the interior they rose to Rs 6 and even at these rates the market was insufficiently supplied. This state of things was generally and probably correctly attributed to a combination amongst the dealers in grain, and it was decided to sell the rice which had been imported by Government. The result was very satisfactory. The trade saw that it no longer enjoyed a monopoly and after a short time confidence was restored. The high prices which so early as January prevailed in this district pressed with great severity on the poorer classes of the people * and from the commencement of the year the local authorities were under the necessity of concerting measures of relief. In no other district, however, in which the failure had been equally pronounced did relief measures cost Government so little as in Rangpur; in no other district equally distressed did the people owe so little to Government and so much to private charity. One of the earliest, if indeed not the earliest, relief centres was opened by Rai Lachmipat Bahadur, whose liberality and benevolence were specially recognised by the Government and from the beginning of the year until the excellent autumn harvest prospects caused a general restoration of confidence and contraction of relief operations, every narrative records an increase in the number of private relief centres and the liberal exercise of private charity. So late as June the Collector reported that private charity continued, and was every day becoming more general; and in every earlier narrative the operations of private relief are shown as very considerable. "I feel bound," writes Mr. MacDonnell, "thus to record the manner in which the landed proprietors and wealthy classes of Rangpur treated their tenantry in their hour of need, because in another portion of this section I have suggested that their ordinary dealings with them are regulated

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* During the pressure of the famine a man was reported to have sold his wife for Rs. 10—Glazier's *Further Notes on the Rangpur Records*, p. 48.

by rigid business principles." The expenditure in grain and money incurred by Government in the district during 1874 and which reached the hands of those who were in need of relief, was 1,517 tons of rice gratuitously distributed, 922 tons paid as wages, 5,963 tons sold and 1,828 tons advanced on loan. At the same time Rs. 1,54,975 were distributed in charitable relief, Rs. 4,50,909 paid away as wages of labour, and Rs. 1,75,934 advanced on loan. A number of people found employment on the extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, then under construction. The number of persons charitably relieved was three thousand in the beginning of March; fifteen thousand in the middle of April, twenty-five thousand at the end of May and thirty-six thousand at the end of June, after which period their number rapidly decreased. Within the month of July, half of these paupers had disappeared and at the end of August only five hundred persons, chiefly habitual and decrepit mendicants, were in receipt of charitable relief. The course of relief to labourers by means of Public Works was very similar. Their number increased from 1,705 in February and 8,988 in March to 53,308 in May, but still more rapidly fell to 5,830 in July and 93 in August, by the conclusion of which month the scarcity in Rangpur and its relief came to an end

Scarcity of 1908-09. The scarcity of 1908-09 was like that of 1874, most severely felt in the *khiyār* tract of this and the adjoining districts, and was due to a partial failure of the rains in 1907 and 1908. The hard *khiyār* soil which is found chiefly in the thānās of Gobindganj, Pīrganj and Mithāpūkur, is capable of producing only one good crop, *viz.*, winter rice, and there being no system of irrigation, the people are wholly dependent on the rainfall. Heavy rains in July and August are absolutely necessary for the winter rice crop, but this was denied them both in 1907 and 1908. The outturn of the winter *aman* crop of 1908—the great crop of the year—being below normal in the rest of Rangpur and in other districts of the province, the price of rice rose in February 1908 to 7¼ seers per rupee, and remained stationary till July when, on the failure of the monsoon rains, it began to rise again and in September it reached the maximum, *viz.*, 5¾ seers This state of things continued till December 1908, when the price fell to 7 seers per rupee and remained at that figure throughout 1909, till a good crop of *aman* lowered the price to 11 seers in January 1910. The price of rice, however, in the distressed area, was only slightly higher than it was in the rest of the district. Large quantities were imported by merchants through the nearest railway stations, *viz.*, Mohimaganj and Pānchbibi. A great part of the imported rice was from Burma, but the people took to it very reluctantly.

The distress was most felt in, and relief measures were practically confined to, an area of about 40 square miles around the village of Kāmdia in Gobindganj thānā. The District Board

spent Rs. 12,000 on repairing the roads in this area and Rs. 15,000 on the excavation of 40 tanks. This gave employment to most of the able-bodied men and women. The rest migrated to other parts of the district in search of work A large sum of money was collected by public subscription for the distribution of gratuitous relief to the old and infirm and to women and children, and it is believed that there was no loss of life from starvation. Under the Agriculturists' Loans Act of 1884, loans to the extent of Rs. 1,20,000 were distributed Thanks to these measures, very few of the cultivators were obliged to part with their cattle.

In 1871, the Collector of Rangpur had suggested that the best way to meet agricultural distress was firstly to improve roads and communications so as to facilitate both imports of food-supplies and migration; and secondly, to establish "Anna Savings Banks," in imitation of the "Scottish Penny Savings Banks." The comparative ease with which the authorities dealt with the scarcity of 1908-09 was due largely to the improved state of district, inter-district and railway communications; but the people have not yet acquired habits of thrift and Postal Savings Banks and Co-operative Credit Societies have not so far appealed to them.

Famine. As far as can be ascertained from the Collectorate records, the only instance of actual famine having been experienced in the district of Rangpur during the period which they cover, was in the Bengali year 1194 (1787-88 A. D.). Unfortunately the correspondence relating to 1770, the year of the previous great Bengal famine, is not forthcoming, and no information is obtainable to show the extent to which the terrible scarcity of that year was felt in this district; nor do the records give any information as to whether the famine of 1783-84 extended to Rangpur.

The first intimation of the disasters of 1787-88, is that on the 28th May the zamindār of Kuchwāra attended in a body on the Collector, and presented a petition to him, while he was engaged in preparing a scheme of land settlement for the year. This document set forth that three months' incessant rain had entirely destroyed the spring harvest, and that they were utterly unable to enter into fresh engagements for their lands based upon the amount of revenue paid by them in previous years. They prayed that an investigation might be made into their losses, and that the new assessment should be conformable to the actual state of their lands. Their application, however, does not appear to have been very favourably received in the first instance; and repeated petitions of a similar nature were subsequently made, representing that the rain continued unceasingly, and the cultivators were in great distress and were abandoning their fields in large numbers, while the cultivation of the winter rice crop was hardly possible, owing to the overflow of the rivers. On the other hand, the Collector maintained that as there were high as well as low lands in the district, and as some parts, such as

Idrákpur, were composed almost exclusively of high lands, the profits from these should counterbalance the losses on the others. The answer of the petitioners was, that the low lands were entirely under water, that the incessant rain prevented the seed from germinating, and that even the high lands, which they had attempted to bring under cultivation, could not be properly attended to or weeded, and that, in consequence of the growth of weeds and jungle, which had choked the rice, all such lands had been turned into pasture for the cattle. Although, under the circumstances, exaggeration must be looked for in these statements, yet the large remissions of revenue finally made, even where there were high as well as low lands, show that they contained a considerable amount of truth. The zamindārs in the central part of the district alone demanded deductions from their revenue to the extent of Rs. 80,000, in respect of their losses on the spring crops only.

The whole matter was referred to the Board of Revenue. The first letter of the Board on the subject, which bears date the 15th June, states that they did not apprehend any distress from the excessive rains, and that even if such should prove to be the consequences, they could not consider inclemencies of season as an admissible plea for an abatement of the land revenue. The violence of the rains, however, continued; the zamindārs refused to accept the settlement of their lands at the terms offered to them, and no one would come forward to farm the district. Accordingly a staff of *amīns* or surveyors was deputed to inquire into the extent of the losses sustained, and the zamindārs continued to hold their estates on the understanding that they would be allowed remission corresponding to their losses, on the termination of the inquiry. On the 29th July the Collector wrote to the Board that the unseasonable rains, which had commenced on the 26th March, and which had continued with unabated vehemence to the destruction of all the *rabi* crops on the low lands, had entirely ceased for the past ten or twelve days, allowing the inundation to subside, and that otherwise the most disastrous consequences would have ensued. He reported that in all parts of the district cultivators had been obliged to construct platforms to save themselves and their families from drowning, and that many lives had been lost. Since the rains had abated, however, the ryots generally had commenced the cultivation of the winter crop. The Collector added that, through fear of driving them away, he was collecting the revenue with great moderation, and was granting the zamindārs extension of time to make their payments beyond the period allowed by the Regulations, being persuaded that in such an unusual emergency he might depart from general rules where an adherence to them would be detrimental to the public welfare. The fair weather was of short duration. The rains set in again with renewed violence on the 1st

August, just as the cultivators were transplanting the young rice; the rivers again overflowed their banks, and in a few days the country was in the same state of distress as that which in the earlier part of the season had caused so much alarm. The Board of Revenue at length recognised the critical state of affairs, acknowledged it to be their duty to show the renters and landholders every reasonable indulgence in their power, and authorised the Collector to grant any suspension of the revenue he might find necessary. Indeed, it was beyond his power to do otherwise, as the land revenue collections for the year were at an utter standstill, except in a few places which from their elevated situation had escaped the general wreck.

But the worst was yet to come. The Tīsta, at all times an erratic river, had long rolled its main stream through the western part of Rangpur and through Dinājpur, till it mingled its waters with the Atrai and other streams, and finally made its way into the Padma or Ganges. At the same time it threw off a small branch in the northern part of Rangpur, which found its way by a circuitous course past Ulipur to the Brahmputra, a little north of the confluence of the Ghāghāt with that river Suddenly the main branch of the Tīsta, swelled by the incessant rains, swept down from the hills such vast masses of sand as to form a bar in its course, and, bursting its bank, it forced its way into the Ghāghāt. The channel of the latter stream was utterly inadequate to carry off this vast accession to its waters, and the Tīsta, accordingly, spread itself over the whole district, causing immense destruction to life and property, until it succeeded in cutting for itself a new and capacious channel through which the river now flows. This great inundation occurred on the 27th August; and on the 2nd September the Collector reported to the Board of Revenue that "multitudes of men, women, children, and cattle have perished in the floods; and in many places whole villages have been so completely swept away, as not to leave the smallest trace whereby to determine that the ground has been occupied." These calamities culminated in a famine. The coarsest rice, which had before been extraordinarily cheap, rose rapidly in price to from 23 to 20 seers per rupee, and was difficult to procure even at this rate. The Collector caused large quantities of rice to be imported into the interior of the district and endeavoured to alleviate the distress by stopping all exportation of grain; but this embargo was taken off by order of the Board of Revenue early in October. Collections of revenue were suspended for a period of two months and provision was made for feeding the starving poor who were daily flocking into the town.

The waters at last subsided, leaving the winter rice crop, which at first had given promise of an excellent harvest, considerably injured, but not wholly destroyed, as had been anticipated. Six weeks of fine weather and the most careful attention to the young

crop raised the expectation that the harvest yet might be a fair one. But the calamities of the season were not yet over, and a cyclone next swept over the stricken country. Early on the morning of the 2nd November, just as the rice was getting into ear, the wind began to blow with great violence from the north-east, attended by heavy rain, and continued to increase in force until the afternoon when it suddenly changed to the east, and came on to blow a furious hurricane, which lasted for about ten hours. Hundreds of trees were blown down or torn up by the roots; the houses of the Europeans were almost all unroofed, and there was scarcely a thatched house left standing. Upwards of six thousand poor were at this time in receipt of daily rations of rice at the civil station, and of these, forty died in the course of the night near the Collector's house. The mortality in the town of Rangpur was much greater. It was estimated that in course of this disastrous year Rangpur district lost one-sixth of its inhabitants. In pargana Pānga half the population disappeared.

The assessment of the district was finally settled with a fair consideration for the losses proved to have been actually sustained. The district records make no mention of any other important occurrence in Rangpur in this year, except the carrying into execution of the orders of the Governor-General in Council "to obviate the difficulties said to arise from the excessive dearness of grain." The Collectors of Rangpur and other distressed districts were instructed to ascertain the amount of grain in store in the various marts and granaries of their districts, and to transmit fortnightly prices current to the Board of Revenue, to be laid before the Governor-General in Council. Every impediment in the way of free exportation of grain on the part of the merchants was directed to be removed, but at the same time penalties were proclaimed against monopolists. The Collectors were instructed, upon complaints of the refusal of any one having grain in store to sell it at current prices, to ascertain whether he had more than was necessary for his own consumption and the probable wants of the locality; and if so, to put up the grain to auction in small lots. It was not till the 4th June 1788 that the Collector was directed to desist from interfering in any way with the purchase, sale, or transport of grain. The investigation made into the losses of the year resulted in the remission of Government revenue to the extent of *sikka* rupees 2,34,622, out of a total assessment of *sikka* rupees 12,42,484. It was many years before the district recovered from the disasters of this *annus mirabilis*.

[E]ARTH-[QU]AKES. The earliest earthquake, of which there is any record, is that of June 1885. It was of moderate intensity and duration and caused little damage. The earthquake of 1897, which was felt throughout Bengal, Assam and Behar, is a notable event in the history of the district. It commenced at 5-15 P.M. on the 12th of

June and the shocks lasted for about five minutes. It was heralded by a loud rumbling noise from the east, followed instantly by violent shocks. The crust of the earth was rent into great yawning fissures, east to west in direction, from which torrents of sand and water poured over the surrounding country. The same phenomenon was observed in rivers, tanks and wells. In many places there were explosions leaving cavities in the ground, 4 or 5 feet in diameter, from which there was a similar discharge of sand and water. A great shrinkage of water and an accession of sand in khals, canals, streams, tanks, and wells was observed immediately after the earthquake. Large tracts of cultivated land were covered with a thick layer of sand, causing much damage to standing crops and rendering many lands unculturable. The earthquake wrecked or damaged most of the public and private masonry buildings, the railways, all sources of water-supply and almost all the roads and bridges The scene of desolation struck terror and dismay into the hearts of the people, which was heightened by the interruption of all communications. There was a sharp rise in the price of food-stuffs and necessaries. New wells had to be hurriedly sunk—a matter, fortunately, rendered easy by the nature of the soil. The loss of life was small for an earthquake of such intensity and was confined chiefly to Rangpur town. This was due to the fact that almost the entire population of the district live in thatched bamboo houses. The amount of damage caused to property—that is, to buildings, roads, railways, bridges, tanks and wells—is estimated at over 30 lacs of rupees.

The earthquake made great changes in the drainage of the country. The beds of many streams and rivers were upheaved and also contracted by the slipping of their banks. Some of them, such the as Gerai Nadi in police station Nageshwari, the Bāmni Nadi and Būri Tista in police station Ulipur, the Sarai and Manās in police stations Sundarganj and Gaibanda, the Nahālia and Akhīra Nadis in police stations Mithāpūkur and Gobindganj, and the drainage canals of Rangpur town were rendered practically useless as drainage channels. Both the Tista and the Ghāghāt rivers were reported to have suddenly become fordable in places. The latter river—a most important drainage channel in the district—is since 1897 a shallow sluggish stream with a weak current and a strong tendency to silt and be choked with aquatic vegetation.

Upheaval in some places was attended by subsidence in others. But, on the whole, the effect of the earthquake appears to have been to raise the general level of the district. The conversion of considerable arable areas, especially in the Gaibanda subdivision, into uncultivable marshes and swamps, would seem to indicate the contrary. But this is accounted for by the fact that, in the process of upheaval, the country has, in places, assumed a cup-shaped formation, allowing little or no outlet for accumulated rainfall. Large areas of cultivable land, in the neighbourhood of Gaibanda,

for instance, were in this way converted into *bhīls* and thrown out of cultivation. The Ghāghāt-Manās canal, constructed in 1907, has drained some of these swamps and restored them to agricultural industry. Another example is the low-lying valley of the Nalya or Nahālia river, about which the Collector in 1907 reported as follows:—"The whole area is one vast *bhīl* overgrown for the most part with grass, weeds, and other vegetation. The river itself is almost lost in this wide marsh; its banks have disappeared, its course, in places, can be followed only with difficulty, and there is no appreciable current. The depth of the water is generally not more than 2 or 3 cubits, but here and there it is as much as 10 or 12 cubits. The action of the earthquake appears to have terminated abruptly at a place called Khuksha, where the river assumes quite a different appearance. From this place it is a swift and deep stream with high banks."

The consequences of the earthquake have not been altogether for evil. The raising and varying of the general level of the district has facilitated its drainage. In some places low and marshy lands have been uplifted and rendered fit for cultivation, and after 1897 there appears to have been a marked improvement in the public health, which is reflected in the vital statistics. The number of deaths during the three years following the earthquake (1898-1900) was 190,883 as compared with 223,034 in the preceding triennium. Since 1897 numerous secondary seismic shocks have been felt, but they have caused no damage and they are decreasing both in frequency and in intensity. It may be noted that the effects of the earthquake of 1897 were not felt in the *khiyār* or quasi-laterite portion of the district and that its action was confined to the *poli*, where the soil consists of sandy loam.

CHAPTER VII.

RENTS, WAGES AND PRICES.

The subject of rent in this district is a very complicated one. There was never a recognised rate in any *pargana* or village. There are some papers in the Collectorate professing to give *pargana* rates of rent, which appear to have been compiled shortly after the Permanent Settlement. They exhibit a vast medley of rates. Those for *āwal* or first class land, for instance, vary from 8 annas to Rs. 2-4-0 per bigha. Under the Muhammadan government, the settlement appears to have been made for the villages in a *pargana* collectively, and engagements for the rent of a village were made with the zamīndār by leading ryots, by farmers or by *huzūri jotedārs.* The amount of rent payable by a village was determined merely by a rough estimate and left to be apportioned among the ryots by the village *amīns,* who were supposed to make the *asal jamā* the basis of their proceedings. This system left a wide opening for fraud, favouritism and oppression, and was not calculated to create a standard rate. In the same village ten or twenty rates would prevail and these might have no necessary connection either with the quality of the soil or the crop raised on it

During the British administration many causes have combined to perpetuate and even accentuate this diversity of rates. Zamindārs have enhanced rents in varying degree. Many of the *jotedārs* who were formerly the actual cultivators, have become middlemen and have sublet their lands to ryots at rates which are often double or more than double the rates paid by themselves to the zamindār. In the settlement of abandoned, surrendered and new lands, competition rates have often been adopted in place of the rates prevailing in the neighbourhood. The enhancement of rents has proceeded more rapidly in the thānās where the population is expanding, such as Gaibanda and Gobindganj, than in the thānās with a declining or stationary population, such as Ulipur and Nāgeshwari. Lastly, the nominal rents paid do not, often, represent the actual incidence of rent per acre, because the area of holdings in most parts of the district has never been surveyed and frequently, when an excess area has been detected, the enhancement of rent has been effected by increasing, not the recorded area of the holding, but the rate of rent. The *nazr* or *salāmi* paid on transfer or new settlements is also not represented in the nominal rent, nor are the illegal cesses (*abwābs*), which are systematically levied in spite of legal prohibition.

No large private estates in the district have been settled under the Bengal Tenancy Act. In 1890 two small estates—Goregrām in Nilphamāri thāna and *Joydeb* in Sundarganj thāna—were settled. The average rate of rent paid by the cultivating tenants was found to be Rs. 3-11-5 in the former case and Rs. 2-9-8 in the latter. Four small estates with an aggregate area of 68,537 acres, of which 57,042 acres were in the possession of tenants, were settled in 1907. The following statement shows the number of ryots of the several classes, with the cultivated area of their holdings and the rate of rent in these estates :—

Name of estate.	Chatnai Jhar-Singeswar (Thānā Nilphamāri).	Kharibāri Dohalpāra (Thānā Nilphamāri)	Pānga Harnārāyan (Thānās Kurigrām, Lalmonirhāt and Kaliganj).	Lotkoya (Thānā Nilphamāri).
Number of ryots at fixed rent.	14	...	91	...
Number of settled ryots	1,162	1,036	39,502	2,173
Number of occupancy ryots.	1	..	14	...
Number of non-occupancy ryots.	4	435	40	25
Number of under-ryots	3	11	38	35
Average rate of rent of a ryot's holding per acre.	Rs. 2-3-8	Rs. 3-6-2	Rs. 3-10-9	Rs. 3-2-1
Average area of a ryot's holding in acres.	3·97	2·52	·96	3·41

In this table the average size of a holding does not represent all the land cultivated by an individual, as he may have holdings in other villages and estates. The average rate of a ryot's rent at this settlement was found to be considerably less than Rs. 4 per acre, while the average rate of rent paid by an under-ryot was ascertained to be Rs. 4-13-0 per acre. The returns filed in connection with the revaluation of the provincial rates, however, give an average of Rs 5 per acre for the district. The averages

for several thānās of the district, as ascertained from these returns and from other sources, are given in the marginal statement. These figures do not by any means indicate any general standard; the rents actually paid cover a wide range of variation on either side of the average, depending on the productive power of the land, of which four classes are recognised, and the nature of the soil—*khiyār*, *poli* and *char*—or its elevation—*dānga*, high *dola*, low. Thus in Gaibanda subdivision

Subdivision.	Thānā.	Average rate of rent paid by cultivating tenant.
		Rs. a. p
Sadr ...	Mahiganj ...	4 8 0
	Kaliganj ...	3 6 0
	Pirganj ...	3 3 0
	Badarganj ..	3 3 0
Gaibanda ...	Sundarganj ..	5 1 0
	Gobindganj	6 0 0
	Gaibandha ...	3 6 0
Nilphamāri	Nilphamāri .	5 6 0
	Dimla ...	5 7 0
	Jaldhaka ...	5 7 0
Kurigram ..	Ulipur ...	3 2 0
	Lalmonirhāt	3 4 0
	Nāgeshwari ..	3 0 0

the rent per acre of *khiyār* land varies from Rs. 1-2-0 to Rs. 6, of *poli* land from Rs. 2 to Rs. 9-14-0, of *char* land from annas 8 to Rs. 6 per acre. In Sadr subdivision, the average rate of rent in Osmanipur is much less than the rate in the neighbouring estate of Batāsban. The practice of assessing rents according to the crop grown, if it ever existed in the district, was abandoned at a very early date. The *parganawār nariknama* in the Collectorate expressly mentions that the rates do not depend on the crop grown—the reason apparently being that nine-tenths of the arable land in the district consists of *poli* soil which can be utilised for a great variety of crops. Rack-renting is very rare, and is resorted to chiefly in the estates of absentee landlords.

It is extremely difficult to institute any comparison between the rate of rents prevailing in former times and now. Uniform data for different periods are not available. According to the "Song of Manik Chandra"* the rent in the 13th century was 30 cowries per month per plough, which, allowing 3 acres per plough, works out at 1½ anna per acre per annum. In 1789 it was ascertained that the ryots of Rādhānagar in Swarūppur were assessed at the rate of 14 annas per acre; in 1875 the cess returns for that estate showed an average rate of Rs. 3-2-0. In 1876 the average rate in Pānga was estimated at Rs. 1-11-0 per acre; at the settlement of Pānga in 1890 it was found to be Rs. 3-10-9 per acre. In 1876 the average rate for the district was estimated by Mr. Glazier at Rs. 3; at the present day it is about Rs. 5. It

* *Vide* ante, p. 20.

may therefore be roughly laid down that the rate of rents in the district has increased by two-thirds during the last forty-five years

Ordinarily, the tenant immediately below a proprietor is known as *jotedār*—the exceptions being when a *patnidār* or *upānchaukidār* intervenes. The *jotedār* is sometimes the cultivating tenant, and sometimes a middleman. Below the *jotedārs* are *chukānidārs* and below these *dar-chukānidārs*, *dar-a-darchukānidārs* and, rarely, lower derivative *chukānidārs*. There is also the agricultural class known as *ādhiārs*. The terms ryot and under-ryot are not used by landlords or tenants. An account of the status of the various classes of tenants and under-tenants will be found in a later chapter. The rents of non-occupancy ryots and under-ryots, of whom there are very few, are considerably higher than those of occupancy or settled ryots. The average price of land is Rs. 150 per acre.

WAGES.

Previous to 1860, since which date a considerable rise in the value of labour has occurred, ordinary and agricultural labourers were paid at the rate of 1 anna to 1⅜ annas per day, and blacksmiths and carpenters earned from 2 to 3 annas a day. In 1908, the wages of a male coolie were 5 annas; of a female coolie, 3½ annas; and of a boy, 2½ annas. The wages of unskilled labour were thus more than trebled in the space of forty years. There is the same upward tendency in the case of skilled labour. In 1860 a carpenter or a blacksmith earned Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 a month; at the present day the former is paid at the rate of from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 a month, and the latter from Rs. 10 to Rs. 15. The wages of a mason are the same as those of a carpenter. The class of native landless labourers is comparatively small and large numbers of immigrants from Behar and the Upper Provinces find employment in the district during the cultivating and harvesting seasons. Agricultural labourers are better paid than the road coolie. Those employed on jute harvesting and retting operations are often paid by piece work on the amount of fibre that they turn out, at rates which enable a good labourer to earn as much as 10 annas a day. All day-labourers go by the name of *krishān*, whether employed on land or otherwise. Labourers engaged by the year or the month are known as *chākars* or servants. *Chākars* always, and *krishāns* sometimes, receive part payment of their wages in the shape of food. A small passenger boat, with a crew of two, can be hired for 12 annas a day, while a bullock cart with a driver costs generally a rupee a day or Rs. 20 per month.

PRICES.

In 1781 common rice sold at 80 seers to the rupee. In the famine of 1787 the price went up to 23 seers per rupee and about 1860 the normal rate was 28 seers to the rupee. Since then there has been a steady rise. In 1891 rice sold at Rs. 3-2-0 and in 1901 at Rs. 4-6-0 per maund. There was a general inflation of prices during the period from 1906 to 1909, and in 1908, owing to the failure of the crops in the district, rice was dearer in Rang-

pur than in any other part of India, and the average price reached the unprecedented figure of Rs. 6 per maund. In 1910 the price returned to a more normal level, *viz.*, Rs. 3-12-0. It would thus appear that during the last half-century the price of rice—the staple food of the district—had increased by nearly 175 per cent. while wages have been trebled and rents not quite doubled.

The value of other agricultural produce has not advanced on the same scale. The marginal statement shows the prices in rupees per maund for several of these commodities in 1871, 1897 and 1910.* The phenomenal rise in the price of tobacco is due to the increased demand from cigar and cigarette manufacturers. Fish now sells for three times what it did forty years ago.

Name of commodity.	1871.	1897.	1910.
Jute	3·0	3·6	5·8
Tobacco	4·0	4·2	10·4
Mustard	3·0	4·5	5·6
Potatoes	2·0	2·0	2·0
Dal	2·25	3·6	3·14
Raw Sugar (*Gur*) ...	4·0	5·4	6·0

MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

The vast majority of the people live by agriculture and their condition is eminently prosperous. This was not the case in former times. The people appear to have been originally extremely poor. Ralph Hitch,† who visited Kuchwara in the 16th century, mentions that "their small money is almonds, which oftentimes they use to eat." Dr. Buchanan, at the beginning of the 19th century, described the condition of the people of all classes as one of abject poverty and ignorance. Even the biggest landowners lived in thatched huts, and he noted that a prominent zamindār, who lavished his means on feeding idle vagrants, did not possess a single brick apartment. Walter Hamilton ‡ in 1820, observed that "the common currency is the *kuldār* rupee of Calcutta and cowries, there being very little gold or copper. In the eastern divisions napkins worth about 3*d*. and portions of salt are also used for the purposes of change." But in 1876, Mr. Glazier writes as follows:—"The improvement in the condition of the people within the experience of observers during the last quarter of a century is borne general testimony to. They have better clothing and eat off brass plates instead of plantain leaves, and the women have gold and silver ornaments instead of zinc and tin ones. A few years ago, it is said, you might go through whole villages without meeting any one who possessed metal utensils; now they are very common and, during the late season of scarcity, they were brought in large numbers for sale in the markets as the

* These figures are abstracted from Mr. Crawfurd's Agricultural Return and Gazetteer (1871) and from the returns published by Government.

† Ralph Hitch by J. Horton Ryley, 1899, p. 111.

‡ *Description of Hindustan*, 1820, p. 205.

last resource of the people before parting with their wives or their cattle." The rapid amelioration of the condition of the people is due to the remarkable fertility of the soil and its suitability for the cultivation of valuable crops, such as jute and mustard. Most lands admit of the cultivation of mixed crops. The rainfall is generally regular and copious, and the occasional floods compensate eventually for the damage they do to standing crops by the amount of fertilising silt that they leave behind. Roads—good and numerous, railways—easy of access, and markets at every fifth or sixth mile enable the cultivator to dispose of his surplus produce to the best advantage. The rise in rents has not overtaken the increase in the value of agricultural commodities and the population is not in excess of the cultivable land. A farm of 25 *bighās* or 8 acres is considered a fair-sized, comfortable holding and ryots who possess 50 bighas or more are quite common. The railways supply cheap labour from the districts of Behar and the Upper Provinces. Most cultivators grow all the rice they need for their own consumption, and tons of paddy are often stored in *golās* against a rainy day. Stocks of jute and tobacco are often held up, for a whole year, in expectation of higher prices. The water-supply is abundant and the leading villagers generally possess their own wells. The rivers and *bhīls* yield a fair harvest of fish, to which the railways add large quantities from the Ganges and Brahmaputra fisheries. Bamboos, reeds and thatching grass furnish in abundance the materials for houses, and the jungle and thickets around every village provide the fuel. The number of great zamindārs is large, but most of them reside in the district. The facilities for police aid and the protection of the courts secure the peasantry from oppression at the hands of their landlords It not infrequently happens that the ryots combine against their landlord and stop payment of rents. In spite of the number of large landlords wealth is very evenly distributed, and the progress of education is testified to by the number of written leases executed, the number of documents registered, and the universal practice of requiring written receipts for rent. The standard of general prosperity is highest in the south and east owing to the superior fertility of the land and lowest in the red clay zone in the west. The Muhammadans are generally better off than the Rājbanshis. They are more intelligent and enterprising and harder workers.

ndebtedness.

Where nature is so bountiful, and every other circumstance favourable, it is surprising that the cultivator should fall into debt. But this is only too true. Years of plenty have made him poorer in the qualities of thrift and industry. The ease with which money can be raised has a fatal attraction for him. He has acquired a fondness for luxuries, such as fish and meat, and spends large sums of money on weddings and religious feasts. Consequently when his crops fail or his cattle die or his houses are

burnt down, he is obliged to have recourse to the money-lender (*mahājan*), whose rate of interest is often as high as 75 per cent. It is the policy of the latter to allow the debt to continue as long as possible, until by compound interest it attains such dimensions that the victim abandons all hope of setting himself free. A common method of obtaining loans is by taking advances from brokers or *mahājans*, repayable in produce or from a wealthy neighbour, repayable in labour. In the former case, no interest is charged, but the produce is valued at a low rate previously agreed upon, irrespective of the current market rate. The peasantry of the district are not, however, as deeply in debt as those of other districts, and probably the majority of the debtors are solvent. There is a great field for co-operative societies in the district, but the movement has made no progress hitherto. There are only two societies, one urban and the other rural. The capital of the former in 1908-09 was Rs. 618 and of the latter, Rs. 562.

Litigation.

Another growing evil is the spirit of litigation This is principally due to a class of persons called *dewānias*, who were apparently unknown forty years ago In origin, the *dewānia* was probably an educated villager who had seen something of the world and had experience of the procedure of the law-courts, the revenue officers and the police. His co-villagers would naturally go to such a man for advice in all matters outside village routine, and that advice would probably be given honestly and disinterestedly. In course of time, as the advent of railways and the expansion of trade widened the villagers' horizon and sphere of activity, the need for such assistance would become more and more frequent, and the *dewānia* became a professional adviser on legal and other matters. Almost every village has one or more of these functionaries, and to some extent it has become the fashion for the villager to have both a *mahājan* and a *dewānia*. It confers a certain prestige. It is only a man of substance who can speak of his "banker" or his "solicitor." The *dewānia* runs his client's cases for him, drafts his petitions, and engages and instructs his muktears and pleaders. No villager will take a step or give any information without first consulting him. Were the checks imposed by a sense of duty and public opinion present, such a system would be of incalculable benefit to the people. But unfortunately they are not and the average *dewānia* takes advantage of the ignorance and blind trust of his clients to serve his own ends. He finds it profitable to encourage and prolong litigation, to concoct false cases and tutor witnesses, to instigate crime or to suppress report of it, and to hinder the investigations of the police. Frequently he degenerates into a common tout and is sometimes retained by a muktear or pleader to bring him business. Occasionally a *dewānia* of the good sort is found, who gives honest advice to the people and assists the authorities. In Kurigrām subdivision, it was reported that a *dewānia* had

acquired such a reputation for legal learning and sense of justice, that people referred their disputes to him for decision instead of going to the established courts. It was said that he adopted the procedure of the courts and mukhtears sometimes appeared before him. Such jurisconsults are however, very, rare; the majority are sea-lawyers and touts of the worst description. It may be mentioned that the term *dewānia* is also used in another sense, equivalent to *kartā*, which means the manager or head of a household.

Dwellings.

The great majority of the people live in thatched houses with walls of woven bamboos or grass attached to bamboo posts, and an earthen floor, raised several feet above the surrounding level. In the *khiyār* tract houses with mud-walls are common. A comfortable *bāri* (homestead) usually consists of four huts placed about a square enclosure, which is surrounded by *tatis* (fences) of bamboo or grass. Two of these apartments are used as living rooms, another as a kitchen and the fourth is usually a pent-house for cattle. Each hut has a door facing the enclosure, and there is usually no window or other aperture. Some houses are provided with a verandah (*hātiña*) The door consists of mats on a bamboo frame, and either slides on horizontal posts or turns on a post at the side. The roof consists of four parts (*chārchāla*), sloping in four directions or of two (*dōchāla*) meeting at a central ridge-pole The houses of well-to-do cultivators are of better quality. Posts of *sāl* or other timber are employed, the doors are made of wood, and, what is an unmistakeable sign of affluence, the roof is made of corrugated iron. Kerosine oil tins are also frequently used for roofing. In such houses, there is usually a second enclosure called the *bahīrbāri* (outer house) where the *thākur-bāri* (chapel) and the *baithak khāna* (sitting-room) are situated. This room has two doors, one facing the other, and is used for transacting business, receiving visitors and accommodating guests. All the houses, and sometimes, only the inner-apartments, are enclosed with a *chegār* or fence of interlaced split bamboos, six or seven feet in height which secures privacy and affords protection against thieves and wild animals. A shop-keeper's house usually consists of two rooms—the shop in front and the living room behind—and a small cook shed.

When Dr. Buchanan visited the district in 1809 he found that there were next to no masonry buildings and that some of the wealthy zemindārs did not possess a single brick apartment. This is no longer the case. All the zemindārs and many *jotedārs* and *mahājans* now possess *pucca* (masonry) buildings, and this type is largely adopted by owners of houses in the towns. In the neighbourhood of rivers, such as the Tista, which frequently change their course, the houses are necessarily of flimsy construction.

Furniture.

The houses of the poor contain no furniture, except a mat or a bamboo *machān* (platform) for sleeping on, a few brass pots

(*lota*), plates (*thāla*), and cups (*bāti*), and a small basket for measuring or carrying grain. The food is cooked in earthen pots (*hāndi*), and earthen vessels (*ghara*) are used for carrying water. A contrivance for husking paddy (*dhekki*), a mill (*janta*), and a wooden stool (*pira*) are found in most houses. The latter is used by the women for washing clothes on. The better classes possess bedsteads (*taktāpōsh*), cane chairs (*mora*), mattresses, quilts, mosquito-nets, and a wooden-chest (*sinduk*). The steel trunk is coming into fashion and is popularly known as "portman" (a contraction of portmanteau). The poorer people either do without lights or use earthen vessels (*chirāgs*) burning mustard oil, or small tin kerosine burners. The better classes use kerosine lamps, the hurricane lantern being extremely popular.

Food.

The food of the people consists mainly of rice, fish, pulses, vegetables and salt. The wealthier classes eat *haimāntik* rice, the poorer take the *bhādoi* variety. In some parts of the district, especially on the banks and *chars* of the large rivers, the poorer folk consume a kind of millet known as *kaun* and *china* in place of rice. In the cold weather potatoes, prepared as a curry or paste (*bhartā*), are a favourite side-dish. *Baingūn* (egg-fruit), *khīra* (cucumber), *sīm* (beans) and pumpkins and marrows of sorts, are largely consumed. Among pulses, *māsh kalai* and *arhār* are the varieties in most demand among the higher classes, and *kheshāri* among the lower. The tender leaves of various plants are also used in the diet of the people, especially those of the jute plant (*pāta-sāg*), and the potato, mustard and pumpkin plants. A paste called *pelka* made of the jute-leaf is greatly appreciated.

The demand for fish is enormous. Large quantities are imported by rail from stations on the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, but the price is nevertheless high, and complaints are often heard that a cultivator will outbid a *bhadrolōg* at the village *hāt* rather than go without his fish. It is a recognised fact that no new *hāt* can be established, unless fish-vendors are persuaded to frequent it. A certain amount of imported dry fish is also consumed. Milk is generally regarded as the best form of food, and most well-to-do cultivators keep cows. Meat plays a very small part in the diet of the Hindu. The domestic duck is commonly eaten and pigeons are killed in honour of a guest. Goat flesh is much appreciated by Hindus of the better class, and the domestic fowl is beginning to come into favour, but not openly. The Muhammadan prefers the fowl to the goat, pigeon or duck, and at big dinners beef is considered indispensible. Pigs are bred and eaten by the *patnī* and *dōm* castes and the *Koches*. The consumption of liquor is not excessive, but all classes indulge freely in tobacco.

Dress.

The ordinary dress of a well-to-do cultivator consists of a *dhoti* or waist-cloth and a *chādar* or shawl thrown over the body. A *gāmcha* or small towel is often placed on the head or carried on

the shoulder. In the cold weather cotton or woollen vests are used by those who can afford them. Among the better classes a *pīran* or shirt of Indian pattern is often worn, and shirts and coats of European pattern are coming into use. As in the rest of Bengal, the people, as a rule, go bareheaded, but Muhammadans of the better class wear caps and turbans. Muhammadan women are clad in *sāris*—long cloths, wound round the waist and body—and a *kōrta* or bodice. Rajbanshi women wear the old Kamrup *patāni*—a square piece of coloured cloth passed under the arms round the back so as to cross in front, where it is secured by the upper corners being tucked in above the breast. Muhammadan women of the poorer class, in a few places, still adhere to this form of dress. Hindu women of other castes wear the *sāri*. The *kharam* or wooden slipper is largely worn in the home, and the use of shoes and slippers of European pattern is becoming general, especially in the towns. Umbrellas are used by rich and poor alike, and in the fields cultivators and herd-boys use a bamboo shield (*jhāpi, mathail*). Various ornaments, made of gold, silver or shell, including bracelets (*churī, muthā*), anklets (*bānka, khāru*), necklaces (*māla*), neck-rings (*hāshli*), ear-rings (*ānti*), and nose-rings (*nāt*) are worn by women of all classes.

Amusements.

The people do not appreciate athletics. Various games of skill and chance are played by children, but a grown-up person who indulged in them, would be regarded as either light-headed or dissolute. They are fond of music, but they look on it as a profession rather than an accomplishment. It is only the lower castes, such as the Boirāgis, Behāras and Patnīs, who cultivate it for its own sake. Professional players and musicians are engaged on all important occasions—by Hindus for the *haimāntik* harvest festival (*nabannya*) and for the various *pūjas*; by Muhammadans during the Mohurrum; and by both classes, when a marriage or a recovery from serious illness is being celebrated and for similar social functions. At Hindu gatherings *jātra* (opera) companies enact episodes in the lives of Krishna and Rāma; at Muhammadan gatherings the doings of Muhammad and the Imams are recited or sung. Stringed instruments (*dotāra, shārīngī, sitār, behāla*), drums (*mirdung, tabla, dhole*), reed instruments (*bānshi*, shanai, *bheur*), cymbals (*kartā*) and ankle-bells (*nepur*) are used. The Bādyakars are instrumental musicians. *Nautches* performed by dancing-girls are a great attraction and people will come in from miles around and sit up the whole night watching their performances.

CHAPTER VIII.

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADE.

Principal occupations.

The principal occupation is agriculture, on which, according to the census of 1901, fully 85 per cent of the population are dependent—the average for Eastern Bengal being 76 per cent. The industrial population only amounts to 6 per cent., which is about half the provincial average. The professions account for one per cent., and miscellaneous employments for the balance. A third of the agricultural population are actual workers; and of these 569,000 or 94 per cent. are rent-payers, 8,000 or one per cent. rent-receivers, and 22,000 or 3 per cent. agricultural labourers. The proportion of rent-receivers to rent-payers is smaller than in any other district of the Division, except Dinājpur, and indicates that sub-infeudation is not very prevalent. Among the industrial population, fishermen (3,000) and fish-dealers (18,000) are most numerous; next come paddy-huskers (4,500), hide and bone-sellers (3,500), barbers (3,000), boatmen (2.500), sweepers and mehters (2,000). mat and basket-makers (2,000), potters (1,500) and workers in iron and hardware (1,000). The number of fishdealers is greater than in any other district of the province but one, and is six times the number of fishermen; this shows that the quantity of fish imported is very large. The professional element is largely made up of priests (2,000) and religious mendicants (6,000); besides the latter there are no less than 16,000 beggars. A remarkable feature, is the small number of women employed in either agricultural or industrial work. On an average, there is one woman to every seven men engaged in agriculture in the province, and one to thirty in the Rajshahi Division; in Rangpur the proportion is only 1 to 70. The great majority of women render no assistance in agricultural operations beyond carrying the mid-day meal to the men in the fields The sex is also poorly represented in the industrial sphere, the most popular occupations being paddy-husking (4,500), fish-vending (1,500), mat and basket making (700) and pottery (400).

MANUFACTURES.

The manufactures of Rangpur are of little commercial importance. In ancient times silk was among its products. An old Muhammadan historian,* writing of "Sarkār Rangpur and Ghorā-ghāt," says :—"Here silk is produced and Tangan ponies, coming from the mountains of Bhutan, sell." The cultivation of the mulberry and silk culture were carried on to some extent till the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but the cocoons were chiefly exported to the Bogra and Rajshahi districts where the silk was

* *Riyāzu-s-Salātin* (Trans. Abdus Salām, M.A.), 1904.

wound off.* At the present day, only some coarse silk cloth of the *endi* variety is manufactured—the thread being spun from the cocoon of a worm (*Philosamia ricini*), that feeds on the castor-oil plant. Opium was grown and manufactured in the district from the earliest times and was a great source of revenue; this industry was put a stop to early in the nineteenth century. Indigo had been cultivated from time immemorial and great quantities used to be bought by the Bhutias, who visited the district annually in large caravans. The cultivation by European planters began in 1792, but there was frequent friction with ryots and zamindārs, and by 1870 all the concerns had passed into Indian hands. The competition of the synthetic dye made in Germany has, since then, completely extinguished the industry. The ruins† of many of these factories may be seen all over the district. A European sugar factory was established at Bardhankote, in thānā Gobindganj in 1794, but ceased working after six years. The same fate has attended its numerous successors. At the present day there is no sugar-refining done in the district, but *gūr* and molasses are manufactured chiefly for domestic or local consumption. The improved Bihiā mills are largely used for pressing the cane. Another important industry that has disappeared is paper-making. Jute fibre was the material chiefly employed, and in 1872 there were 130 manufactories at work. At the census of 1901 only six persons were returned as being engaged in paper-making.

The foundations of a new industry have been laid by the establishment of the Rangpur Tobacco Company in 1909, financed and managed by Indians. Tobacco is one of the great staples of the district and the cigarette habit has taken a firm hold on the masses; the enterprise should have a great future, if the drawbacks of a damp climate can be neutralised. The manufacture of *satranjīs* or *dhurrīs*—coarse striped cotton carpets—has long been a speciality in this district The industry was introduced by Mr. Nisbet, the Collector in 1830, and flourished as long as a cheap supply of cotton from the Gāro Hills was available. This has ceased to be the case since the introduction of cotton-cleaning machines in that district and the consequent export of the commodity to Calcutta. The carpets are of large size and made on coloured patterns. The variety known as *pīlpaiya* (elephant's foot) was special to Rāngpur, but some weavers have taken the business to Dacca.‡ The industry is declining and barely supports about one hundred families, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Nisbetganj near Rangpur, the weavers being all Muhammadans. The yarn is imported, but the dyeing is done locally Another petty industry is the manufacture of jute sacking, known as *chāt*; this gives

* Glazier's *Report*, Vol. I, pp. 179, 180.

† The ruins of a large factory exist at Kishoreganj. Within the grounds are a cemetery and a fine mango orchard.

‡ E. W. Collin, *Report on Arts and Industries in Bengal*, 1890.

employment to a few families in Boragāri, Bhogdābri and other villages in Nilphamāri subdivision. The cotton hand-loom industry is gradually dying out. There were 3,500 weavers in 1881, 2,000 in 1890, and only 750 in 1901. The Swadeshi movement is apparently responsible for the opening of a small hosiery business at Bhitarband, in thānā Nāgeshwari, with about half a dozen knitting machines worked by hand, which turn out cotton socks and vests. These articles command a ready sale in rural markets. The point of interest about this concern is that some of the operatives are young men of the *bhadralōg* class. They are said to earn about Rs. 20 a month. Ivory-carving appears to have been the means of livelihood of many families in former times; the business is now carried on by a few persons at Pānga, in Kurigrām subdivision. Ivory has become costly, and patronage has contracted greatly; continuous employment cannot be obtained and the hand has consequently lost its cunning. The work now turned out is clumsy and ill-finished.

The various handicrafts that minister to the requirements of the cultivator, the artisan and the house-holder are carried on to a greater or less degree; but the people depend largely for their supply on neighbouring districts and Calcutta. In every department there is a lamentable absence of the delicacy of taste and fineness of manipulation which is so conspicuous in other parts of India. Bell metal utensils are manufactured on a small scale in Kurigrām subdivision and brassware at Gōmnati, in Nilphamāri subdivision. The mats of bamboo and grass that are produced are of coarse quality. The number of boat-builders and wheelwrights is very small and the requirements of the people are met from adjoining districts. Village blacksmiths are numerous and do a profitable business in *daos* and agricultural implements.

Fisheries.

The demand for fish is very great and every source of supply—rivers, water-courses, *bhīls* and tanks—is exploited. The zamindārs realise a handsome revenue by the lease of their fisheries. The great majority of the fishermen are Hindus—the chief castes being Mānjhis, Behāras, Kaibarttas, Telengas and Namasūdras. The Muhammadan fishermen are known as *Dhāwas*, *Dālias*, and *Keyots*. In recent years, the yield of fish has decreased greatly owing, partly, to the silting of rivers and *bhīls* and partly to the improvident methods pursued. Every conceivable contrivance is employed including many varieties of nets, night-lines, hooks, spears and bamboo traps. No close season is observed and the smallest fry are not spared. The boats usually employed are the *shārenga*, and the *kōsh* or *pānsi*. In the rainy season when the water-courses overflow, every field becomes a fishery and every cultivator a fisherman. The fishermen usually dispose of their catch to dealers who take their purchases to the nearest *hāt*. There are several centres for the local wholesale fish trade, such as Pānialghāt in Sadr subdivision, Kūlmighāt and Fulchāri, in

Gaibanda subdivision, Nūnkhawa and Chilmāri, in Kurigrām subdivision. As noted above, the supply of fish in the district is decreasing and is not equal to the demand, and the condition of fishermen is not prosperous. Most of them are obliged to supplement their earnings by taking up land, or working as boatmen, labourers and *pālki*-bearers. In the thānās of Jaldhāka and Dimla, in Nilphamāri subdivision, fish-curing is carried on to a small extent, on very primitive lines. The fish after being gutted, is dried in the sun and then steeped in fish oil. No fish is exported from the district in any form.

Factories.

Besides the Tobacco Factory mentioned above, there are jute presses at Domār, Saidpur and other jute centres, and a small ginning factory at Fulchāri. At Saidpur there are large railway workshops.

TRADE.

Formerly all the trade of the district was carried by river. The produce available for export was bought up by brokers, who made advances to the cultivators The crops were stored in warehouses on the river banks and shipped, when the rivers rose in the rains, to large marts in the south of the province, and especially to Dacca and Shirājganj. Forty years ago, almost all the important trading villages and produce depôts of the district were situated on the banks of rivers. Since the introduction of railways, which now traverse the district in all directions, there has been a general movement of trade to the neighbourhood of railway stations, and the old commercial centres in the interior have declined in importance.* The proportion of river-borne to rail-borne trade is practically a negligible quantity. The goods traffic of the river steamers is chiefly with Fulchāri, the only river station in the district, which is connected with the railway. A certain quantity of country produce, especially tobacco, potatoes and jute, is exported in large boats from river-side trading centres, such as Mughalhāt on the Dharla, and Kālidaha on the Tista, to the southern districts of the province, and to Calcutta.

Externa trade.

The external trade of the district is mainly with Calcutta. The chief imports in 1909-10 were piece-goods (1,600 tons), paddy (11,000 tons), rice (18,000 tons), iron and steel goods (3,700 tons), kerosine oil (900 tons), salt (14,000 tons), sugar (3,500 tons) and tea (680 tons). Three-fourths of the piece-goods were of foreign manufacture. The heavy imports of rice—chiefly from the adjoining districts of Dinājpur and Bogra, and, in seasons of scarcity, from Burma—are due to the great extent to which jute has displaced autumn rice in the cultivation of the district. About half the imported sugar is unrefined. A small quantity of coal is imported from Burdwān and Manbhūm. Nearly a thousand tons of fish were imported in 1907 at eight stations in the district from river-side stations on the Ganges and from Dhubri.

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* Thus the old mart of Ghorāmāra on the Tista has given please to Domār. and the trade of Bārobāri has passed to Lalmanirhāt.

The chief exports in 1909-10 were jute (127,000 tons), tobacco (9,200 tons), hides (1,700 tons), mustard and rape (1,620 tons), paddy (1,450 tons) and cotton (700 tons). The export trade is chiefly in the hands of the European, Marwāri and Sāha merchants. The chief centres of the jute export business are at Domār, Darwāni, Saidpur and Rangpur, but there are small baling presses at almost every railway station on the line. Arakanese merchants purchase and export large quantities of tobacco to Burma, where it is used for the manufactures of cigars. But the greater part goes to adjoining districts and to Calcutta, and is smoked in hookas or manufactured into cigarettes. Kālidaha and Pānialghāt, on the Tista, are important centres of the tobacco trade. There is also a considerable export trade in potatoes at these places. The cotton exported is not grown in the district, but imported from the Gāro Hills in country boats and cleaned and pressed and then exported again to Calcutta. There is also a considerable export of ginger.

Internal trade.

The internal trade is chiefly carried on at the *hāts* or markets, which are held throughout the district. Probably there is no village which has not one or two *hāts* within a radius of five miles of it. The *hāts* belong to the zamindārs who levy a small toll from the vendors. The market is usually held in an open space, where the vendors occupy temporary booths or squat on the ground. Around the open space are the houses of the permanent shopkeepers, who deal in salt, kerosine oil, piece-goods, metal utensils and other imported goods. In the central space business is transacted in all kinds of country produce, rice, vegetables, spices, betel, tobacco, fruit, fish and earthenware. Here the villager disposes of his surplus produce and obtains what he needs himself. The more important *hāts* are also frequented by the brokers (*dalāls*, *paikārs*) of merchants dealing in country produce. Some of the villagers carry their wares to market in baskets; others take them in carts or, when the *hāt* is held near a river, in boats. Pack ponies and bullocks are sometimes used. The small brokers also do a good deal of business in jute and tobacco in the interior by travelling from village to village and buying as they go along. In the rains they move in large boats in this way from *ghāt* to *ghāt* until a full cargo is obtained. A few Kabūli and up-country pedlars do a small business in the villages in piece-goods, blankets and other articles of clothing.

The most important *hāts*, *ghāts* and trading centres are Lālbāgh (in Rangpur town), Nisbetganj, Kālidaha, Pānialghāt, Kaunia, Bādarganj, Kākina, Bhōtmari, Būrirhāt, Balua and Dhāperhāt in Sadr subdivision; Domār, Bārogāri, Saidpur, Nilphamāri, Darwāni, Kishoreganj, Rāmganj, Nowtāra, Shutibāri, Bābrijhār, Bhowāniganj and Thākurganj, in Nilphamāri subdivision; Govindganj, Sundarganj, Sadullapur, Shaghātta, Kāmārjani, Fulchāri, Tulsighāt, Kāmdia and Birāt, in Gaibanda subdivision; and Kuri-

grām, Lalmonirhāt, Mughalhāt, Bhurangamāri, Bārabāri, Ulipur, Chilmāri and Nāgeshwari, in Kurigrām subdivision.

Fairs

A number of commercial fairs (*melās*) are held in the district during the cold weather. The largest is that held in February at Darwāni, in Nilphamāri thānā. The attendance varies from 40,000 to 50,000. Other important fairs are held at Pānga, in Dimla thāna, Barabhitā in Jaldhāka thānā, Bādarganj in the thānā of that name, and Birāt, in Govindganj thāna. These *melās* usually last for a month each, and are mainly cattle fairs, large droves of cattle being brought for sale from Behar. In addition, a brisk trade is carried on in piece-goods, ready-made clothing, blankets, cartwheels, umbrellas, utensils, brass and ironware, shoes and *manahāri* (fancy) goods. At the Darwāni fair elephants, Patna sheep, Bhūtia ponies and camels are also sold. The camels are purchased by Muhammadans and slaughtered on religious occasions or in fulfilment of a vow. The zamindārs derive a substantial revenue from these *melās*, a fee varying from eight annas to a rupee per head being charged on the sale of cattle.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS.

ROADS.

Before the district came under the administration of the Company there was only one main road, *viz.*, the great road constructed by Raja Nilāmbar from Kamātāpur, in Cooch Behar, through Rangpur to Ghorāghāt. This road was kept in good repair by the Muhammadans. The route from Ghorāghāt to Dacca was by Govindganj into Mymensingh and thence along the bank of the old Brahmaputra. Besides this road there were numerous country roads and tracks which were kept in order by the zamindārs The only means of through communication with Calcutta was by boat, and it was estimated in 1781 that the up journey by *budgerow* would take 52½ days,* while the down journey was accomplished in twenty days The usual route was *viâ* the Mahānanda river in Dinājpur, the Padmā and the Ganges.† Walter Hamilton in 1820 observed that although Rangpur "is 260 travelling miles from Calcutta and the roads indifferent and intersected by an amazing number of rivers and water-courses, yet in a palanquin the journey is with ease gone over in four days." The journey by railway is now accomplished in twelve hours. Since then main roads have been built to all the neighbouring district towns *viz.*, to Dinājpur, Bogra, Jalpaiguri, Dhubri and Cooch Behar. Convict labour was largely employed in the construction and repair of these roads. The indigo-planters also constructed, at their own expense, many small roads leading to their factories which tended "greatly to the accommodation of the inhabitants." The funds available were, however, small and progress was slow. In 1871 the Road Fund obtained Rs. 21,929 from ferries (127) and Rs. 3,215 from toll-bars (10), but only a third of these sums was allotted for expenditure in the district. All the roads in 1871 were of the 3rd class and practically unbridged, and traffic was with difficulty carried on during the rains. Railways had not yet been introduced. The most important road then was the one from Rangpur to Kāliganj, a distance of 45 miles, on the Brahmaputra. Government and private stores were conveyed by steamer to Kāliganj and brought to Rangpur from there by road. Under the system introduced by the Road Cess and the Local Self-Government Acts great extension and improvement has been effected and the

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* *The Good Old Days of the Hon'ble John Company:* Reprint, 1907, p. 15.

† *Rangpur Bartabaha*, No. 161, dated 27th August 1850. For this and other extracts from old files of this paper, I am indebted to Babu Surendra Chandra Roy Chaudhuri of Kundi.

district is now traversed by a vast net-work of roads* which penetrate to the remotest parts. The earthquake of 1897 did enormous damage to roads and bridges, and the work of restoration still absorbs much of the Board's income that would otherwise have been available for further development, especially in the direction of feeder railway roads.

The District Board now maintains 17 miles of metalled and 1,207 miles of unmetalled roads, besides 1,170 miles of village roads. A section of 8 miles of the Rangpur-Dhubri road is maintained by the Public Works Department. This is done under an arrangement by which the Board gave up this portion of the road for the Tīsta-Kurigrām Railway line, and Government undertook to maintain another road alongside of the abandoned road. Several of the main roads are bridged throughout and the ferry arrangements are fairly satisfactory. The soil in most places is firm and absorbs water rapidly—qualities which it owes to the equal proportion of sand and clay in its composition.

PRINCIPAL ROADS.

The principal roads radiate from Rangpur in all directions and form the main arteries of traffic.

BOGRA ROAD.

The Bogra Road after crossing the railway line, proceeds in a southerly direction, past the police Stations of Mitbāpūkur (12 miles), Pīrganj (24 miles), Polāshbari (36 miles) and Govindganj (43½ miles). At the 51st mile it crosses the Kātakhāli river by a ferry and enters the Bogra District at Gajāria. The road is bridged throughout.

DUBHRI ROAD.

The Dhubri Road sets out from the Mahiganj end of Rangpur in a north-east direction. It crosses the Eastern Bengal State Railway at Bhūtsara station (5 miles) and again at Kaunia where it meets the river Tīsta (17 miles), where there is a ferry. In this section there are three breaks, only one of which (10th mile) is provided with a ferry. From Tīsta junction across the river the road runs in an eastward direction till it meets the railway at Rajārhāt (22 miles) from which point it proceeds alongside of the line up to Kurigrām (30 miles). This last section from Rajārhāt to Kurigrām is maintained by the Public Works Department. At Kurigrām the traveller is ferried across the Dharla and the road sets out in a north-east direction for Patamāri on the Dhubri border, passing through Bhitarband and crossing the Girai Nadi (33 miles), the Dūdhkumar at Madārganjhāt (42 miles) and the Gangādhar (45 miles). Ferries are provided at these three places.

DINAJPUR ROAD.

The Dinājpur road proceeds westwards from Rangpur town in a direction more or less parallel to the railway line. It crosses the Ghāghāt at Nisbetganj (4 miles), the Jūbaneswari at Bādarganj (15 miles) and the Karatoya at Kholahāti (20½ miles) on the

* These innumerable roads are partly responsible for the inefficient drainage of the district.

Dinājpur border. Ferries are provided at these places, and bridges over all the other interruptions.

JALPAIGURI ROAD.

Starting from Rangpur, the Jalpaiguri road proceeds in a north-west direction, crossing the Ghāghāt at Jāffarganj (5 miles) by a iron screw-pile bridge, and the Kharubhōj stream by another bridge at the 12th mile. Pursuing a more northerly direction, it passes through Kishoreganj (19 miles) and crosses the Deonai stream by a ferry near Gōmnati (44 miles) where it takes a sharp turn to the west and crosses the Eastern Bengal State Railway line near Chilahāti (49 miles). Here it resumes a north-west direction and crossing the Rangopāni (53½ miles) enters the Jalpaiguri district.

COOCH BEHAR ROAD.

The Cooch Behar road commences from Mahiganj (Rangpur) and proceeds in a north-east direction to Kālidaha (10 miles) where the river Tīsta is crossed by a ferry. A rivulet, the Trimohīni, is similarly crossed at the 13th mile, and the Sati Nadi at the 16th mile. The road then proceeds due north, almost parallel to the railway line, passes through Mughalhāt, and reaches the Dharla river and the Cooch Behar frontier, where there is a ferry, at the 24th mile.

CHILMARI ROAD.

Setting out from Mahiganj Bazār (Rangpur) the Chilmāri road proceeds in an eastward direction, passes by the Kāliganj Out-Post (9 miles) and crosses the Tista by a ferry at Pānialghāt (19 miles). This portion is bridged throughout. After touching Ulipur (24 miles) the road proceeds in a southward direction to Chilmāri (36 miles). This portion of the road was completely wrecked by the earthquake of 1897, but is being thoroughly reconstructed.

GAIBANDA ROAD.

The Gaibanda road starts from Mahiganj (Rangpur) in a south-easterly direction and passes through Alaikūri (11 miles), Bāmondānga (22 miles), Naldānga (26 miles), Sadullapur (32 miles) before reaching Gaibanda (40 miles). The road is bridged throughout. It meets the Eastern Bengal State Railway line at Bāmondānga and Naldānga.

KALIGANJ-BAWRA ROAD.

This road proceeds in a north-west direction from Kurigrām, passes through Bārobāri (8 miles), crosses the railway at Mohendranagar (12 miles), and after passing through Saptibāri (16 miles), again crosses the line at Aditmāri (19 miles). It then takes a turn to the west to Kākina (28 miles) and from there resumes a northward direction, closely following the Bengal-Duars Railway line, which it crosses more than once, and passing through Tushbhāndar, Kāliganj (Police station), Bōtemari, Hātibānda and Barakhāta, terminates at Bowra (63 miles) on the Jalpaiguri border.

FULKUMAR ROAD

The Fulkumār road branches off from the Dhubri road, 4 miles north of Kurigrām, and proceeds in a northward direction. It passes through Nāgeshwarī (7 miles) and Raiganj (11 miles), crosses the Eastern Bengal State line (15 miles), passes through Fulkumār (20 miles) and enters Cooch Behar a mile further north.

Among other important roads may be mentioned those which connect Rangpur with Saidpur, Kākina, Kāliganj and Balua; Nilphamāri with Darwāni and Saidpur, and with Kishoreganj; Gaibanda with Ghorāghāt and Kāmdia, and with Gobindganj; and Kurigrām with Ulipur.

REST-HOUSES.

Besides a dâk bungalow at Rangpur, the Board maintains 35 Inspection bungalows and rest-houses at convenient centres throughout the district (*vide* map) These bungalows are all more or less furnished and some are provided with table and kitchen equipment.

RAILWAYS.

Few districts are better provided with railway communications. The northern section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway cuts through the western half of the Nilphamāri subdivision from north to south. From Parbatipur junction, on this railway the Assam line strikes eastwards; it passes through Rangpur town and crosses the Tīsta and Dharla by large bridges. In 1901, the terminus of this line was at Gitāldaha, in Cooch Behar, but it has since been extended to Dhubri, in Assam. A narrow gauge branch line starts from Tista junction and runs to Kurigrām. The Bengal-Duars Railway starts from Lalmonirhāt Junction, on the Assam line, and after traversing the northern half of the district meets the Eastern Bengal State Railway at Jalpaiguri. A branch line called the Santahār-Fulchāri Branch Railway from the Eastern Bengal State Railway at Santahār traverses the Gaibanda subdivision to Fulchāri on the right bank of the Brahmaputra. Finally the Kaunia-Bonārpāra extension, opened four years ago, starts from Bonārpāra on the Santahār-Fulchāri Branch and proceeding northwards through Gaibanda joins the Assam line at Kaunia. Altogether there are over 200 miles of railway in the district, and the stations are Saidpur, Darwāni, Nilphamāri, Domār and Chilhāti on the northern section; Bādarganj, Shāmpur, Rangpur, Bhūtsara, Kaunia, Tista, Mohendranagar, Lalmonirhāt, Mughalhāt and Pateshwari on the Assam line; Mohimaganj, Bonārpāra, Bharatkhāli and Fulchāri on the Santahār-Fulchāri Branch line; Badiakhāli Road, Trimohini, Gaibanda, Kāmārpāra, Naldānga, Bāmondānga, Chowdhurāni, Pīrgacha and Annadānagar on the Kaunia-Bonārpāra Extension; Singherdābrihāt, Rajārhāt, Tograihāt and Kurigrām on the Kurigrām Branch; and Aditmāri, Kākina, Tushbhānder, Bhotemāri, Hātibāndha and Barakhāta on the Bengal-Duars Railway.

WATER COMMUNICATIONS

The steamers of the Assam service, belonging to the India General Steam Navigation Company and the River Steam Navigation Company jointly, ply up and down the Brahmaputra and call at four stations in the district, *viz.*, Fulchāri (the terminus of the Santahār Branch Railway), Chilmāri, Rowmāri and Dharlamukh. The Tista and Dharla are navigated throughout the year by ordinary trading boats and dug-outs and the other rivers and water-courses during the rainy season. The amount of traffic that

passes by water is not large; by far the greater part is carried by road and railway. The recently-constructed Ghāghāt-Manās canal, 5 miles in length, is utilised for local trade. There are 146 public ferries as well as numerous private ferries in the district.

BOATS.

The smallest boat used is the *khonda*, a dug-out made of *sāl* or *chāma* timber. It is used principally by fishermen in the *bhīls*. The *shārenga* is a larger dug-out, and is in very general use among fishermen in the rivers. It is anything up to 25 feet in length and 4 in breadth. The *chāma* and *holong* are large dug-outs used for local trade. They have a crew of three men or more and can carry up to 200 maunds. The *holong* is imported from Assam. The *tepatuā* is an enlarged *shārenga*—three planks being added to the sides, one on top of the other. The carrying capacity of these boats ranges up to 300 maunds. The *ghātbārī* is a smaller form of *super-shārenga*, only one plank and a half being added. The *pānsi* is the popular passenger boat. It is constructed of strips of timber bound together with iron nails and is roofed with bamboo matting. The *jong* and the *kosha* are large cargo boats requiring crews of ten men or more, and carrying up to 500 maunds.

POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS.

Until 1837 no general system of postal service existed in Bengal. There were only certain services instituted by Government for its own purposes, the use of which was conceded as a privilege to private persons. There were no postage stamps and the charges, levied in cash, varied according to the weight of the letter and the distance it was carried. In 1795, the charge from Calcutta to Dacca for a packet weighing 2½ tolas was 3 annas;* the charge to Rangpur must have been somewhat more. The system introduced in 1837 was at first very imperfect. In 1850, the office at Rangpur was the only one in the district. It was managed by the Civil Surgeon, under whom was a staff of *dāk-munshis*. From this office the letters were distributed to the several police stations, from whom the addressees took delivery. An extra clerk was posted to each thānā for this purpose.† The first branch office was opened experimentally at Gopālpur in 1857. At the present day there are 91 post-offices and 566 miles of postal communication; the number of postal articles delivered in 1908-09 was 4,202,972. Besides a departmental office at Saidpur there are 14 postal telegraph offices situated at Rangpur, Alamnagar, Darwāni, Domār, Fulchāri, Gaibanda, Kākina, Kālidaha, Kurigrām, Lalmonirhāt, Mahiganj, Mughalhāt, Nilphamāri and Ulipur. The number of Savings Bank deposits in 1908-09 was 6,619 and the amount deposited was Rs. 2,19,081. The value of the money-orders issued in the same year was Rs 40,34,450, and of those paid, Rs. 11,86,720. The great difference between these figures does

* *The Good Old Days of the Hon'ble John Company*, Reprint, 1907, page 483.

† *Rangpur Bartabaha*, No. 162, dated 25th June 1850.

not by any means indicate that the balance of trade is against the district or that more money leaves it than comes into it. The big firms, who purchase jute and other commodities, obtain their supplies of money through agencies other than the Post Office. The value of the jute, alone, exported from the district in 1909-10 would be about 170 lakhs of rupees. The money orders issued from the district represent chiefly petty merchants' and tradesmen's payments to wholesale firms in Calcutta, savings remitted by up-country coolies and by officials, clerks and traders whose families do not reside within the district, and lastly, rents remitted by zamindari agents to non-resident landlords.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

REVENUE HISTORY.

The land revenue history of the district may be said to begin with the Muhammadan administration. Rangpur proper, otherwise Kuchwāra or *Sarkār* Cooch Behar, was that portion of the old Province of Kamrup which was last conquered by the Muhammadans from the Cooch Behar Rajas. It comprised six *chaklās* or divisions. Of these the Mughals succeeded in conquering without any difficulty three, *viz.*, Fatehpur, Kāzirhāt and Kākina. The other three, Boda, Pātgrām and Purrubbhāg offered a very determined resistance, and though they were nominally ceded in 1711, they continued to be held in farm by the Cooch Behar Raja. The Muhammadans named their new conquests Fakīrkūndi, and this territory, together with the *pargana* of Kūndi and the *chaklā* of Ghorāghāt constituted the *sarkār* of Rangpur-Ghorāghāt or the Province of Rangpur, when it passed under the rule of the East India Company, by the *farmān* of the Emperor Shāh Alum in 1765. Within the same jurisdiction was included the extensive district of Rangāmati, but it was transferred from Rangpur and formed into a separate collectorate before the decennial settlement. In 1773 the adjacent state of Cooch Behar became dependent on British protection, subject to the payment of a tribute of half of its annual revenues into the Rangpur Treasury About the same time Baikantapur, otherwise known as Battishazāri, which had never been subject to the Mughals, was annexed and added to the jurisdiction of the district. In 1772 Bāharbund * and in 1787 Swarūppur were transferred to this district from Rājshāhi and, immediately after the Permanent Settlement, the *parganās* of Pātilādaha and Bhitarband also came in from the same district. A change in the course of the Brahmaputra necessitated the transfer of the greater portion of Pātilādaha (thāna Dewānganj) to Mymensingh, and when the river Karatoya was made the boundary between Rangpur and Dinājpur, a portion of Idrākpur—the nine annas Ghorāghāt zamindāri— including the site of Ghorāghāt was transferred to Dinājpur. The losses sustained by the district on the creation of the districts of Jalpaiguri and Bogra have been indicated in a previous chapter.

MUHAMMADAN REVENUE SYSTEM.

In those early days a large proportion, estimated at between one-third to two-thirds, of land capable of cultivation lay waste, and in order to secure the regular expansion of revenue, as population and cultivation increased, it appears to have been the practice,

* Ghorāghāt and Bāharband were for one year (1786-87) formed into the separate District of Ghorāghāt, with headquarters at Ghorāghāt.

from days anterior to Muhammadan rule, that the Government should receive a share of the crop, whether taken in kind or estimated in money. Zamindārs and village officers participated in this share. The rule of assessment, under Muhammadan rulers, appears to have been to determine the rent of each piece of land according to the *pargana* rates, the nature of the soil, the species and extent of cultivation, and the position of the cultivator that is, according as he was a resident of the village (*khudkhāst*) or a non-resident (*paikhāst*). A yearly survey was a necessary incident of this system. It was the duty of the *kanūngo* or confidential agent of the Government, whose name implies that he was the depository and promulgator of the established regulations, to superintend the accounts of the *patwāri* or village accountant, and to check the changes in the occupancy, boundaries and produce of the land. In a vast empire like that of the Mughals, and especially in the years of its decline, such an elaborate system could not be strictly adhered to. The practice of *khās* or direct management and collection was not unattended with difficulties, and in Bengal it was always the rule to have recourse to a settlement with zamindārs or with farmers (*kroriēs, chowdrīes*). The payment made by the cultivator had long since been consolidated into one sum called the *asal* or original rent, while the zamindārs, *patwāris, mandals* and other inferior officers were provided for by grants of land free of rent or at reduced rates, and partly in money. In Rangpur, the Muhammadans always farmed the district; the zamindārs never paid their revenue direct to Government This system, while it afforded the officers of Government no interest in the accuracy of the village accounts, rendered the fabrication or the concealment of them more feasible. In Bengal, moreover, the disorders, which increased as the Mughal Empire declined, had destroyed the efficacy of the control which the revenue officers were supposed to exercise. The office of *kanūngo* became little more than a name, and no better mode appeared for gaining knowledge of the value of the lands than could be obtained by a comparison of different years' collections.

An important result of the farming system was that it placed the zamindār in a condition corresponding more nearly to European notions of proprietary right than could be claimed under the old system when they shared a portion of the produce with the officers of Government. In theory the profit of the farmer, or the zamindār (apart from his allowance), was supposed to be derived principally from his opportunities for extending the cultivation. In practice this was probably the smallest part of his emoluments. Under various denominations, the zamindārs levied impositions on their tenants to a very considerable amount over and above the standard assessment. In many places these imposts had been consolidated into the *asal* and a new standard had been assumed as the basis of succeeding imposition. These practices set an

example to the Government, who naturally entertained the idea that the actual receipts from the country exceeded, in a very great degree, the demands of the State. Hence the number of additional taxes, which figure in the provincial and *sarkār* budgets of Bengal in the last period of Muhammadan rule. They were in general levied in certain proportions to the standard assessment, but the proportions were fixed arbitrarily and without any calculation of the produce of the land. The original principle of land taxation had been completely subverted. The zamindārs paid these *subadāri* imposts, but recouped themselves by fresh *abwabs*, which the demands of Government tended to confirm and perpetuate. Rangpur affords a striking illustration of the results of the new method. The total *jamā* for the district was Rs. 3,36,000 in 1742 and it remained at that figure till 1755, after which there were heavy annual enhancements, and in 1761 the assessment was Rs. 11,48,986—the highest demand under Muhammadan rule. In the following year it was reduced to Rs. 11,29,324, but in this year the ryots of Kāzirhāt rebelled against the severity of the collection and the rising had to be put down by armed force. The collections almost invariably fell short of the demand, and in subsequent years there were smaller assessments, based apparently on the collections of previous years In 1764-65, the year preceding the commencement of the English management of the revenues, the demand was Rs. 5,09,182 and the collections were Rs. 4,87,882.

BRITISH LAND REVENUE SYSTEM.

Early Settlements.

The East India Company succeeded to the *diwānī* or fiscal administration in 1765, but it was not until 1772 that they assumed, by the agency of their own servants, the direct management of the revenues. For some years direct settlements were made with the zamindārs, who were thus recognised as having a right to collect the revenue from the actual cultivators. But no principle of assessment existed and, with the exception of a five-year settlement introduced by Warren Hastings in 1772, the revenue was, in general, adjusted from year to year. The most noticeable settlement in Rangpur was that of 1771-72, made by Mr. John Gross, the first Collector, of whom there is any trace. The demand was Rs. 11,01,742 and the collection Rs. 9,14,615—the highest ever made in the district for many years. A report of the *kanungo* (October 1797) shows the casual way in which the assessment was made. The mofussil papers of the previous year were called for and all the items stated in them were taken, including those for which there were no resources. Two items, *ferāri* and *polātaka*, aggregating over a lakh of rupees, were added to the demand to make up for deficiencies caused by desertion, and a counter-deduction of nearly half a lakh was allowed for anticipated fresh desertions. A tax of over two lakhs was put on under the name of *darivilla*, the nature of which does not clearly appear, and to cap all, there is a lump sum of Rs. 81,960 under the denomination

of *andāzi beshi* or probable increase. The early settlements with zamindārs were not successful. This was due* partly to their ignorance, both of their interests and of their business, of which they had no previous experience. They were, therefore, largely in the hands of their *gumasthas* and servants, who, as long as they supplied them with money, were left without control. Another cause was their total want of property and credit: they were not in a position either to assist indigent ryots with the necessary capital or to allow them time, when *kists* fell due, to dispose of their produce to advantage.

The coercive measures provided by the regulations of Government for the enforcement of the payment of revenue, were corporal punishment, confinement, and the sale of lands. Previous to the permanent settlement the last of these was only resorted to as a root and branch cure after other means of healing had failed. Corporal punishment was often a euphemism for torture, a recognised method of collection in Muhammadan times. There is no instance of any Collector using or countenancing the use of corporal punishment for the enforcement of the payment of the Government dues; but that zamindārs were in the habit of flogging their ryots is spoken of as a well-known practice, and no special notice is taken of it. Confinement, however, was constantly used as a coercive measure. During the famine year 1787 A. D. the whole of the zamindārs were in confinement at one time, and the Collector complacently reported to the Board regarding the dewān of Idrākpur (the zamindār was a lady, and the dewān was held responsible for the revenue), that he had for a long time past been under restraint according to the regulations, and deprived of every convenience to render his confinement the more severe. A custom peculiar to Rangpur, and as the then Collector wrote, by all that he could learn of the character and disposition of the zamindārs, a process but too necessary, was to locate *sezawāls* with them, in order to prevent the public revenues being embezzled, and to forward them as they arrived from the moffussil to the sudder *kacheri* at Rangpur. The collections at the *kacheri* were then usually made during the night.† The female zamindārs gave the Collector the most trouble. He could not confine them, nor could he even catch them; for when he sent for them to live at Rangpur, they ran away to Calcutta. In 1781, the zamindār of Kākina, a lady, thus took her flight; the Collector wrote to the Committee in Calcutta to send her back, and they tried to apprehend her and failed. The final upshot, however, was the sale of some of her lands two years later.

It was not uncommon in those days, when lands were plentiful and tenants scarce, for the ryots to desert their holdings in order to evade payment of rent. In 1787 the Collector of Dinājpur

* Report of Mr. Goodlad, Collector, 1781.

† This practice has long since been discontinued.

complained * to the Collector of Rangpur that many of his ryots had "eloped" into Rangpur and proposed placing peons on the boundary with power to arrest the fugitives without warrants. He supported his proposal with the following pregnant remarks:— "By this reciprocal service not merely security to the revenues will be insured, but improper emigrations be checked, and the inhabitants prevented from wandering backward and forward to the vexation of the officers of the collections, who in all these cases are reduced to hold out false promises, and practise every species of deception to induce the ryots to setttle; even *pattās* at a fixed rate can be of no avail, while natural inclination to delay payment is combined with so powerful an incentive to evade it altogether." The Collector of Rangpur in reply suggested an exchange of emigrants, and the notable proposal was apparently dropped.

In 1781 a return was made to the Mughal system of farming, but the exactions of the revenue farmer, Devi Singh in 1783, caused an insurrection of the ryots, which has been described in a previous chapter. They complained of the tax known as *darivilla* and of the discount which they had to pay for the exchange of local or *nārāyani* rupees into Arcot rupees, in which the rental was payable. The system of settlement with the zamindārs was then again resumed. Great reductions were made in the demand for 1783-84 and it became the aim of succeeding settlements to recover the higher standard of previous years. These efforts occasionally led to outbreaks, as in 1785, when the ryots of Kāzirhāt left their habitations and encamped in a body on a plain, 20 miles from Rangpur. The grievance in this instance, was a tax of 2½ annas which had been imposed to meet the increased revenue demand of the year. Large remissions had to be made in 1787—the year of flood and famine—and in 1789, the year preceding the Decennial Settlement, the assessment was only Rs. 6,20,624.

The Permanent Settlement.

In the meantime the Board of Directors was carefully considering the revenue policy to be permanently adopted in the province, and it is interesting to observe the gradual working out of the idea of the Permanent Settlement. Mr. Glazier writes:— "In 1776 the Board of Directors said:—'Having considered the different circumstances of letting your lands on leases for the life or in perpetuity, we do not, for many weighty reasons, think it advisable to adopt either of these modes.' But they approved of a proposition of letting the province of Dinajpur to the Raja for life, as an experiment, the issue of which would in some measure enable them to judge of the propriety of adopting a general system on similar principles. These instructions were repeated year by year, and in 1783, on receiving information of the fixed leases granted

* Glazier, Report on the District of Rangpur, p. 32.

for Baharband and other tracts, they wrote indignantly :—'We repeat our orders, that you do not grant fixed leases on any pretence whatever. The *expediency of letting the lands for a longer period* than one year, or in perpetuity, is a great political question, on which, in the present critical situation of our affairs, we cannot at this time come to any determination.' In 1788 the Raja of Cooch Behar applied for a fixed lease for his zamindāri of Boda, etc., but the proposal only met with a contemptuous notice from the Board. A change of policy, however, suddenly took place. In the spring of the same year (1788), orders were sent to make a five years' settlement; and the Boda zamindār, after a second ineffective attempt to get a permanent settlement, agreed to accept the short term." The Board of Directors ultimately decided to recognise and perpetuate the position of the zamindārs as it stood in the concluding years of Mughal rule and the decennial settlement, declared permanent in 1783, was the result. The principle adopted at this settlement was that the "*jama* of the preceding years compared with accounts and information supplied by the Collectors, and the recommendation of the Board founded thereon" should furnish the standard. No attempt was made to measure the fields or estimate the outturn, and "minute examinations or new local investigations into the value of land" were discouraged. In Rangpur, unlike other districts, the resources of the country had never been estimated, and no worse time could have been chosen, so far as the interests of Government were concerned, for effecting an assessment on the basis of the collections of previous years, because the country had not yet recovered from the effects of the calamities of 1787. Yet this appears to have been the only basis of the Decennial Settlement in Rangpur. No investigation of the resources of every *parganā* was made, as in Dinājpur, and the assessment, fixed in perpetuity in 1793 at Rs. 8,38,664, was arrived at, mainly, by conjecture. Some additions were made to the demand when the zamindārs were relieved of police charges.

ffects of ermanent ettlement.

This assessment was, on the whole, a light one and particularly so in Bāharband. It was considerably lighter than in the adjoining district of Dinājpur, where it was based on detailed enquiries and calculations. Accordingly, the zamindārs have had little difficulty in paying the Government demand and sales of defaulting estates have not been by any means as numerous as in other districts. In several instances in which the zamindārs, with the Collector's sanction, sold *tāluqs* for the payment of their balances, purchasers were readily found willing to take them at more than their proportionate share of the Government demand, paying in addition a premium of more than two years' revenue.

'osition f the amindārs.

Regarding the controversy as to whether the zamindārs, confirmed at the Permanent Settlement, were land-holders in the English sense or revenue collectors of varying length of standing,

Mr. Glazier makes the following observations in his "Report on the District of Rangpur":—

"In considering the position of the zamindārs prior to the Permanent Settlement, it must be borne in mind that the term zamindār is a very wide one, including different classes of owners, the origin of whose rights is very various. Thus, in Rangpur, we have what, for want of better terms, may be styled the semi-feudatory estates, such as Bāikuntpur, and the *chaklās* of Boda, Pātgrām, and Purrubbhāg held by the Raja of Cooch Behar; the sub-feudatory estates, or the rest of Kuchwara, held by descendants of Cooch Behar officers, who had a century before been inducted by the Mughals into their estates as zamindārs; the new purchasers, such as the Bāharband and Swaruppur zamindārs, who could pretend to no rights beyond any limitations the Government might have chosen to have entered in their deeds of possession; the large zamindārs, owners of what had been principalities, such as Idrākpur and Dinājpur; and lastly, the smaller zamindārs who were generally holders of *tāluqs* which had been separated from the larger estates. It was the position of the fourth of these classes, whose principalities had been parcelled out of Bengal, that determined the question of the position of the zamindārs in general.

"The zamindārs were more than mere contractors for the revenue. That term rightly defines the position of the farmers, who, under the Muhammadans and under the first settlements of the English, leased the districts from Government. The Committee of Revenue, in their order on the Bāharband measurement case in 1786, speak of the 'zamindār's office,' and of his being 'vested with the superintendence and collection of the revenues of a zamindāri.' This gives a closer view of the zamindārs' real position: they held an administrative office, which had become hereditary by long custom, and they possessed an estate in that office with certain vague and undefined rights. The superior right of Government as the sole owner of the soil was unequivocally maintained and admitted. During the calamitous year 1194, Bengal era (1787-88 A. D.), the Collector reported, that in order to induce the zamindārs to engage for the previous year's revenue without deduction, he had represented to them that a zamindār had a right to his land no longer than he continued a good and useful subject to the State; and that, if they insisted on withholding their services, he should insist on their relinquishing by a regular deed, all right and title to their zamindāris. Again, a petition from the zamindārs relating to the Settlement of 1195, Bengal era (1788-89 A. D.) commences with the following words:—'The country belongs to the Company, and we, the zamindārs, are only appointed for the purpose of transacting the business of it.' The zamindārs could not make a fresh measurement or assessment on their ryots without the permission of Government. Mr. Purling, the Collector, who commenced the Decennial Settlement, writes in

1790 :—' Government in this country is not the participator according to exigency in the produce of the land, but the positive possessor of the whole of the profits of the soil, allowing but a maintenance to those whose duties are devoted to the State.'

" On the other hand, the hereditary character of the zamindārs and their preferential right to a settlement 'on terms sufficiently moderate to enable them to maintain a degree of respect among their dependents,' was recognised by the Directors in 1777. When dispossessed of their zamindāris, owing to the collections being leased to farmers, they were granted a *mushahāra*, or proprietary allowance of ten per cent. upon the revenue derived from their lands; and they were also declared entitled to hold a moderate amount of land not included among the settlement assets. Two incidents of a distinctly proprietary character attached to their status. One was that they could grant sub-tenures or *tāluqs*, by gift or sale, out of their zamindāris. For a long time previous to the English occupation they had been in the habit of making these grants, and they continued to do so subsequently, in spite of prohibitions. Several such grants, where the revenue had been secured by a proper assessment of the *tāluqs*, were made with the sanction of the Collectors, and are recorded in their proceedings; but the right had been so much abused, that the action of the zamindārs in this respect had seriously curtailed the Government revenue. Secondly, their lands were liable to be sold for arrears of revenue. This itself is a distinct admission of their possession of some saleable rights; and this liability is enunciated in our earliest records. In the instructions for the Settlement of 1777, it is laid down 'that for all lands let to the zamindārs as above directed, it be expressly stipulated in their *kabūliyats* that in case of their falling into arrears they shall be liable to be dispossessed, and their zamindāris or portions of them sold to make good the deficiency' This liability to sale is repeated over and over again. Mr. Goodlad, the Collector in 1789, reports that he tried every means, except corporal punishment, to recover the balances from the zamindārs; and he applied to the Board of Revenue for permission to proceed to the sale of their lands. Threats of sale constantly occur, which were not carried into effect, owing to the balances being otherwise recovered; and instances are not wanting of actual sales. In fine, we may conclude that, while the zamindārs held those scraps of proprietary right which had naturally developed out of the hereditary character of their office, their position altogether was so very vague and undefined, and the authority of Government as a recent conqueror was so freely allowed, that any conditions of settlement and limitations of their authority whatever, short of absolute deprivation, would not have borne the character of unjustness or harshness. The Permanent Settlement which gave the proprietary right to the zamindārs—with some uncertain reservations in

favour of the ryots, which were never enforced—was a pure gift,—a splendid one to those who had brains and money to make good use of it, but a fatal one to those who had neither."

Position of the ryots.

The ryots shared in the advantages of the low rate of assessment of the Permanent Settlement, and it is probable that they held far more lands than they paid rent for. The Regulations of 1793, also, made certain reservations in favour of them as against their zemindār. The latter was prohibited from ousting his tenants or from taking rents in excess of the customary rates. *Abwābs* were to be revised and consolidated into one sum and no new *abwāb* was to be imposed. Full accounts of demands and collections had to be maintained and filed. A registry of rights and obligations was to have been compiled, but this important work was never carried out. Many circumstances combined to make these safeguards nugatory. In no other district were the poor more abject and the rich more tyrannical. The zamindārs* were, as a rule, ignorant and indolent men who left the management of their estates to rapacious and unscrupulous *gumāsthas*. There was no *pargand* rate; no estate, no village even, had a fixed rate, but each holding had its special rent depending on circumstances peculiar to itself. Where the legal dues recoverable by the proprietor had never been ascertained, it was impossible to detect, much less to prevent, exaction. The number of zamindāri imposts was legion: every domestic occurrence in a zamīndār's family, the building of a new house, the purchase of an elephant, every *pūja*, every visit paid by him to his villages, afforded a pretext for fresh exactions. The utter ignorance of the local authorities as to the resources of the country absolutely prevented their interposing their authority to enforce rates, of the operation of which they could not foresee the extent. The provisions requiring zemindārs to maintain and file accounts became before long a dead letter, *kanungoes* were abolished, and a time came when zamindārs were considered to be landlords in the English sense and interference between landlord and tenant was generally deprecated. The idea of property was insisted on more and more and that of obligation dropped out of sight. The legislation of the last century has happily done much to give effect to the intentions of the Permanent Settlement in regard to the ryots.

SURVEYS AND SETTLEMENTS.

The whole district was surveyed in 1855-58 and 1874-75 in connection with the general Revenue Survey of India. The maps prepared at this survey indicate the boundaries of *parganās* and of the *mauzās* comprised in them. The Revenue Survey was preceded by a *Thākbust* Survey, so named because pillars of earth, called *thāks*, were erected at important points. The

* For a contemporary opinion of the zamindārs of Bengal see *Seir Mutāqherin* (Trans. Vol. III, pp. 204-5), where they are referred to as a "malevolent race, a refractory, short-sighted, faithless set of people, who mind nothing but present interest, and require always a strict hand."

Thākbust maps indicate the boundaries of estates (*mahāls*) as well as *mauzās*. Since then there has been no general survey, but small portions of the district have been surveyed in connection with the periodical temporary resettlement of petty Government estates under the Regulations, settlements of private estates under the Bengal Tenancy Act, and proceedings for the partition of private estates. The standard of land measurement is the *bigha* of 20 *katās*, which is equivalent to 1,600 square yards or nearly a third of an acre. But in some *parganās*, the *dōne* of 13 katās is the recognised measure.

ESTATES.

Landed property in Rangpur comprises the following classes of estates:—(1) Permanently settled revenue-paying estates; (2) revenue-free estates; (3) Government estates, temporarily settled or under direct management.

Revenue-paying estates

The permanent settlement of 1793 was, by section 4, Regulation VII of 1793, to be concluded with the "actual proprietors" of the soil of whatever denomination. Besides zamindārs, *chaudhurīs* and farmers, a number of *tāluqdars* were declared to be "actual proprietors" and admitted to direct settlement. The same course was adopted with regard to a number of *aima-mālguzāri* tenures or lands held at a fixed quit-rent, under grants by Muhammadan Governors previous to the Company's accession to the *diwāni* or granted since that date by proprietors of estates for a consideration. The number of estates permanently settled in this way in 1793 was 72 including 45 parent estates and 27 *tāluqs*. At the present day there are 676 estates on the *tauzi* or revenue-roll. The increase is due to five causes:—(1) under Regulation II of 1819, 125 non-valid revenue tenures were resumed and permanently settled with the occupiers; (2) the stringency, with which the revenue was collected after the decennial settlement, led to the sale and break up of many estates. Idrākpur, for instance, collapsed early and was split up into a number of small estates. In this way over 150 new estates came into existence; (3) partitions, especially of the *tāluq* properties, have effected an increase of about 200 estates; (4) the lands evacuated by the Tīsta, when it changed its course early in the nineteenth century, were settled with the riparian owners and added 23 estates to the revenue-roll; and (5) transfers to and from other districts have resulted in a net increase of over thirty estates.

As a consequence many of the estates on the *tauzi* roll are quite small, some paying less than Rs. 10, and many less than Rs. 100 a year to the treasury. The ownership of an estate does not, therefore, necessarily imply a zamindāri or proprietary status. On the other hand, a great part of the property of some of the leading zamindārs of the district, consists of *patnī* and other tenures.

Revenue-free estates.

Under Hindu and Muhammadan rule, grants of land, free of revenue, were frequently made by the Government for the

maintenance of troops, for religious purposes, or as a reward for meritorious services. They were known as *bādshahī* or imperial grants, as distinguished from *hukumī* grants, which were made by zamindārs or the officers appointed to superintend the collections. These tenures were known by different names according to the object of the grant, e.g., *brahmattar*, for the support of Brahmins; *debottar*, for the worship of the gods; *pīrpal*, for the veneration of a Muhammadan saint; *lakhirāj* or *aima* for the support of Muhammadans. The British Government confirmed such *bādshahī* grants as were found to be hereditary and were made prior to the Company's accession to the *diwāni* in 1765. The *hukumī* grants were extremely numerous, and arose from the system of farming adopted by the Muhammadan Government, which deprived the zamindārs of any interest in the collections and yet continued to them the privilege of making grants of land, free of rent or at nominal quit-rents. This power of alienating land was greatly abused and often overstepped its legitimate scope, which was the endowment of religious or charitable institutions. Grants were frequently made out in the names of relations and dependants of the zamindār, under the pretext of a charitable purpose. The Government was very liberal in regard to *hukumī* grants and the only conditions required for recognition were that the grants as well as the *boná fide* possession of the grantees should be anterior to 1765. In the resumption proceedings, 313 grants were recognised and 125 were declared invalid and resumed. The latter figure included nearly 100 fictitious charitable grants of the Bhitarband zamindār. A vast number of *hukumī lakhirāj* holdings, under 100 *bighas* in area, were relinquished without enquiry to the zamindārs, who were at liberty to assess them, after establishing their invalidity in the resumption courts. The number of revenue-free estates in Rangpur, now, is 304.

TENURES.

As already observed, the assessment made at the permanent settlement was comparatively light, and the land tax now bears a very small proportion to the annual value, which has advanced by leaps and bounds. It was ascertained at the survey and settlement of certain private estates in 1890, that the proportion had fallen from about 80 per cent, at the time of the permanent settlement to about 35 per cent., and in one case to 11·5 per cent. In spite of this large margin of profit, sub-infeudation has not proceeded to a very great extent. Throughout the greater part of the district there is no one between the zamindār or *lakhirājdār* and the *jotedār*. The latter is sometimes a middleman and sometimes a cultivating tenant. Occasionally a *patnidār* or an *upanchaukidār* or an *ijāradār* intervenes. Below the *jotedār* is the *chukānidār* who is generally a cultivating tenant.

Patni tenures.

A *patnī* tenure is held by the lessee and his heirs at a rent fixed in perpetuity. The tenure is permanent, transferable and

hereditary, but is liable to sale for arrears of rent under a summary process. The lessee has the power to sublet his *tāluq* on the same conditions as those by which he is bound to the proprietor. An inferior holder is allowed to stay a sale arising from the default of his superior, by paying into court the amount due. The respective rights of zamindār, *patnidār*, under-*patnidār* and sale purchaser are laid down in Regulation VIII of 1819. The creation of a *patnī* tenure implies a virtual surrender *pro tanto* of proprietary rights, and is only resorted to when the zamindār is in need of a large sum of money, a heavy premium being generally paid by the *patnidār*. There are about 200 *patnī* tenures in the district, especially in the south, where subordinate *patnīs*, known as *dar-patnīs* and *sepatnīs*, are also met with.

Jpānchāki
nd other
ermanent
enures.

Upānchāki tenures are very numerous and were generally granted by zamindārs, before and after the permanent settlement, to Brahmin and Muhammadan priests for religious purposes. They are said to derive their name from the fact that the rent was fixed at a fifth of the prevailing rent (from *panch*, five).

They are held subject to a nominal quit rent, fixed in perpetuity and are transferable and heritable. They are saleable, but not voidable for arrears of rent. Many of them have changed hands and are not devoted to the objects for which they were originally created. There are about 300 *upānchāki* tenures in the district. The *majkūri* tenure is similar to the *upānchāki*, except that it is liable to enhancement of rent. The tenure was peculiar to the district, but hardly exists at the present day. A few tenures known as *mukrārī* and *istimrāri* or *maurashī* also exist. The former are generally leases of small plots of land for the construction of permanent dwelling-houses, factories, gardens, tanks, wells and burning or burying grounds. The leases are permanent and heritable, and the rent is fixed in perpetuity. *Istimrārī* or *maurashī* tenures are permanent, but are liable to enhancement of rent in the absence of a stipulation to the contrary.

nt-free
ures.

The origin of rent-free tenures has been described above. The zamindārs did not avail themselves, to any great extent, of the opportunity given them of resuming these *lakhiraj* holdings and their number now is 3,983.

Rent-free holders are generally not of the class of persons who follow the plough and most of their lands are cultivated by under-tenants, *ādhiārs* and hired labourers.

es.

By far the most common class of tenure is the *jote*. The tenure-holder had no status at the permanent settlement. But it cannot be supposed that these valuable properties, whose profits amount to a half or more of the total rental, have been wholly built up since then. On the contrary, the history of the late Muhammadan and early British period shows the commanding position held by the ryot chiefs, who constitute the great body of tenure-holders in the district. In Muhammadan times when the officials

withdrew to Murshidabad during the rains on account of the unhealthiness of the climate, the people had to organise themselves for defence against raids from beyond the frontier, and their leaders came to the fore in every agrarian revolt. So in revenue matters the chief ryots arranged for the demand from the villages with the zamindāri officials This naturally resulted in their getting much of the land into their own handsand letting it out to sub-tenants. In the report of the Swaruppur Commission of 1790 several instances are given showing that the head ryots let out their lands to under-ryots or *prajās* at a handsome profit.

The word *jote*, in this district, is used very loosely and means any kind of holding. There are *jotedārs* in Bāharband estate who pay Rs. 80,000 a year as rent, and there are *jotedārs* who pay Rs. 2 only. From old documents it would appear that the term meant any tenancy held direct under the zamindār, irrespective of size or mode of enjoyment. It now includes both tenures and *ryoti* holdings, as defined in the Bengal Tenancy Act. At the settlement of Pānga and other private estates in 1897, two-thirds of the *jotes* were recorded as tenures and one-third as holdings and in the several estates, the percentage of *jotes* recorded as tenures did not vary directly with the average size of the *jotes* in each estate. The average area of *jotes* of all kinds was found to be 4·89 acres. Some of these *jotes* may have been granted for terms of years, but apparently the tenants were allowed to continue in possession at the same rates after the term expired. Until recently tenants were in great demand, and zamindārs were not anxious to raise difficulties about the recognition of transfers and the enhancement of rents. Mr. Glazier in 1875 noted the tendency of cultivators to drift from one place to another, and the frequency of sales of *jotes* and holdings of all kinds by private deed or decree of court, irrespective of period of occupancy. In his opinion all *jotes*, large or small, were saleable and heritable. Since 1875, the conditions have been reversed; the population of the district has increased considerably and the zamindārs, on the one hand, are adopting a stricter policy, while the tenants, on the other, are unwilling to surrender the privileges which they have hitherto enjoyed. The zamindārs wish to treat all *jotes* alike and claim that all rents are liable to enhancement and all transfers subject to their consent. Some tenure-holders relying on the presumption created by section 50 of the Bengal Tenancy Act, contend not only that their tenures are permanent, but that the rent is fixed in perpetuity. In the absence of authoritative decisions of general application, it is difficult to say what the position of the tenure-*jotedar* exactly is. As a matter of fact, all *jotes*, whether tenures or not, are frequently made the subject of conveyance by sale, gift, or otherwise. The landlord takes no action, so long as rents are paid and receipts accepted in the name of the transferor, that is, the recorded tenant. Suits for eviction are very rare. Very often the *jote* changes

hands several times, without any mutation of names being effected. It is only when the transferee desires his name to be recorded as tenant that trouble arises. Some zamindārs are unable or unwilling to enforce the payment of a fee, and in such estates it may be maintained that *jotes* are transferable by custom, with or without the consent of the landlord. In other estates a *salāmi* or *nazar* varying from 25 per cent. to 100 per cent. is exacted. In one estate, it is reported that the purchase-money is wilfully understated in order to reduce the amount of this imposition; but the zamindār employs spies, known as *thags*, to ascertain the correct figures. The payment of a transfer fee is more easily evaded when the estate is a petty one, or is divided among a number of sharers.

The civil courts have given contrary decisions on practically the same evidence—the standard of proof required to establish "ancient" custom being apparently not the same in different courts. At the Settlements of 1907 "all the tenancies, which were dealt with as tenures, were classed as 'permanent' within the meaning of section 3 (8) of the Bengal Tenancy Act. This only indicates that the tenure is heritable, and is not held for a limited time. The expression in no way connotes fixity of rent, but under section 11 of the Act a statutory right of transfer, with or without the consent of the landlord, accrues to every permanent tenure." *

Ijārās.

The *ijārā* tenures are farms limited to a term of years. The farmer has no claim to a re-settlement on the expiry of his lease. The rents of fisheries and markets are ordinarily leased in this way, but *ijārās* of agricultural rents are not uncommon.

Chukānidārs, ādhiārs and other cultivating tenants.

As already observed, many *jotedārs* are cultivating tenants. But the more common designation of this class is "*chukānidār.*" This term appears originally to have been applied to tenancies held under a *jotedār*, and not held directly under a proprietor or *tāluqdār*, but the term is very loosely used now and sometimes means not only cultivator's holdings but all kinds of sub-tenures, under-tenures, ryots and under-ryots. A third class of cultivating tenants are *ādhiārs* or *bargādārs*, a species of metayer tenantry, who cultivate lands under *jotedārs* or *chukānidārs*, and share the produce in certain proportions with their landlords. The latter generally receive a half share (hence the term *ādhiār*), but when they supply cattle, ploughs or seed, their share is generally more than a half. Some of these *ādhiārs* have acquired the status of settled ryots, some are non-occupancy ryots, and others are under-ryots. Their tenancies are believed to be non-transferable. Many *ādhiārs* possess lands which they hold in their own right and naturally they devote more attention to these, than to their *ādhi* lands. Landlords find it more profitable to cultivate their *khāmār* (private) lands with hired labour or to let them out to tenants, and the number of *ādhi* holdings is decreasing.

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* *Final Report of the Survey and Settlement of Four Private Estates*, by Syed Izhar Husein, B.A., 1897

Almost all cultivating *jotedārs* and *chukānidārs* possess occupancy rights, but as regards the transferability of their holdings, the case is more complicated. At the settlements made in 1897, the attestation officers came to the conclusion, that *jotes* and *chukānīs* were transferable by custom, but the landlords did not accept this finding. The position is as uncertain as in the case of tenure-*jotes*. The privation of the right of transfer would not be an unmixed evil; it would make it more difficult for the ryot to borrow money on the security of his land and would, to that extent, check improvidence and extravagance.

There is a small number of *ryoti* tenures known as *kaimī maurasī* or *mukarrarī* which are held at fixed rates in perpetuity and are permanent and heritable. The *sarasarī* tenure, on the other hand, is granted for a term of terms, at the end of which the rent is liable to enhancement. A distinction is drawn between *khudkhāst* ryots who reside, and *paikhāst* ryots who do not reside, in the village in which the lands they cultivate are comprised. Below *chukānidārs* are *dar-chukānidārs,* and below them *dara-darchukānidārs,* who are again followed (in rare cases) by *tasya-chukānidārs* and *tāle-tasya-chukānidārs*. The majority of these are under-ryots, without any rights of occupancy.

Chakrān holdings.

Formerly it was the practice for every wealthy zamindār to remunerate his domestic servants by *chakrān* grants of land conditional on continuance of service; the washerman and barber received 10 or 12 *bighās* each; the potter and carpenter 10 to 20 *bighās* each; the *pālki*-bearer 4 *bighās*. The practice has now been almost wholly abandoned and zamindārs resume their grants whenever opportunity offers.

LANDLORDS AND TENANTS.

The district is remarkable for the number of large zamindārs. The majority of these are the descendants of the collecting agents or *choudrīs* of Hindu times who were allowed to remain in possession by the Muhammadans and whose title as zamindārs was confirmed at the permanent settlement. The family name of no less than 16 out of 25 leading zamindārs is Roy Chaudhury. The zamindāris in the north and centre of the district originally constituted the three *chaklās* of Kākina, Kāzirhāt and Fatehpur, and the *sarkār* of Bajūba or Kūndi. Kākina and Kūndi have remained more or less whole. But Fatehpur is now represented by the estates of Fatehpur, Bāmandānga, Monthana, Pānga and Ghariāldanga, and Kāzirhāt by estates of Kāzirhāt, Mahipur, Tushbāndar, Tepa and Dimla. Idrākpur or "nine annas Ghorāghāt" which embraced a great part of the south of the district is now split up into a number of small estates. In the west is the Batāshan estate which represents the portion of Swarruppur which came into the district when the Karatoya was made the boundary between Dinājpur and Rangpur. In the east are the estates of Bāharband and Bhitarband which have remained intact since the permanent settlement, and in the south is a part of *pargand*

Pātilādaha which belongs to the Tagore estate. The Maharaja of Cooch Behar also owns considerable estates in the district. All the leading zamindārs but one, are Hindus, and the majority reside in the district, the chief exceptions being the proprietors of the Bāharband, Batāshan and Pātilādaha estates.*

The district was very lightly assessed in 1793 and sub-infeudation has not proceeded to any great extent. The condition of the landlords is, as a rule, very prosperous, and where it is not, the cause may be traced to the extravagance or incompetence of the proprietor or his predecessors. This was not the case in former times. Mr. McDowall, one of the earliest Collectors of the district, reported as follows in 1786:—"The zamindārs of this district, either from sex, age or long habitual indolence, are never known to interfere in public business, and are in such a state of dependence on their *gumāsthās* that I have known a zamindār day after day attend the durbar of his *gumāsthā*, thereby reversing the distinction of their respective ranks in life." The zamindār of to-day is very different. He is generally well educated and very much alive to the financial side of his interests. The greater zamindārs, of course, have to employ managers who are invested with very considerable powers; and a sub-manager or *nāib* is appointed for each collection circle. The *nāib* wields enormous power, the extent of which varies according to the amount of control exercised from above and of the capacity for resistance from below. He is on the spot and in direct contact with the tenants. It is often in his power to make or break a man. He may grant a settlement on favourable terms or he may withhold it; he may allow time for the payment of arrears or put the holding to sale. The tenants often prefer—sometimes they have no choice—to refer their disputes to him for settlement. He holds his court (*ijlās*) in his *kacheri* house, and his orders, which take the form of fine, confinement or corporal punishment, are enforced by a staff of *barkandāzes*. An aggrieved person rarely ventures to seek redress in the courts of law, lest this should bring greater trouble on him. In some estates the position of the officers of the thānā is completely overshadowed by that of the *nāib*. It is not often, however, that the latter wantonly abuses his powers and his intervention frequently saves his tenants from having recourse to the tedious and expensive methods of the law.

The relations between landlords and tenants are, on the whole, very satisfactory. Cases of serious friction rarely occur, and the extortionate zamindār who takes his pound of flesh is an exception. It is true, that in spite of legal prohibition, most zamindārs wink at the levy of *abwābs* or illegal cesses by their employees. The *barkandāzes*, as well as the superior staff, are usually very poorly paid, and are expected to eke out of their income by various perquisites and impositions. But many of these are sanctioned by

long usage and the ryots rarely demur to paying them. Written rent receipts are granted throughout the district and periodical enhancements are usually effected by amicable arrangement. In times of distress, the landlords frequently suspend the collection of rents and make advances in money or in kind to their tenants. In 1874, the year of scarcity, the zamindārs came bravely to the rescue and the Collector left it on record that "in no other district did the people owe so little to Government and so much to private charity." In 1908-09, again, they responded liberally to the call for charitable relief. They are not behind the land-owners of other districts in lending their support to any movement of public utility. In former years the zamindārs took an active interest in matters of village sanitation, education, and communications, but since the establishment of the District Board there has been a tendency to disclaim their obligations in this direction.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

Administrative charges and staff.

The district formerly included the greater part of what are now the districts of Goālpāra and Jalpaiguri and a portion of the Bogra district. It attained its present dimensions in 1871. On the introduction of the sub-divisional system, the southern portion of the district was formed into the Bhowāniganj sub-division in 1857. At a later date the two sub-divisions of Nilphamāri and Kurigrām were carved out of the Sadr sub-division, and the Bhowāniganj sub-division was converted into the Gaibanda sub-division, with a slightly reduced area.

The district thus consists of the four sub-divisions of Rangpur, Nilphamāri, Kurigrām and Gaibanda. The distribution of area among them is admirably suited to the requirements of the district, which is in form an isosceles triangle, in the centre of which is Rangpur, while the country enclosed by the three angles constitutes the three other sub-divisions. The Sadr sub-division is under the direct supervision of the Collector, and the others are in charge of Sub-divisional Officers, who are generally Deputy Collectors of the Provincial Civil Service. At Rangpur the staff consists of five Deputy Collectors, of whom four are Magistrates of the first class and one of the second class, and one Sub-Deputy Collector, who is generally a Magistrate of the third class. Occasionally a Joint Magistrate or an Assistant Magistrate is also stationed there. No special staff is entertained for the Government estates (Khāsmahāls) which are small and few in number, and for the estates which the Collector administers under the Court of Wards. There are at present three estates of the latter kind.

REVENUE.

The revenue of the district, under the main heads, rose from Rs. 17,62,223 in 1880-81, when the income-tax had not been imposed, to Rs. 18,20,359 in 1890-91, and to Rs. 20,31,005 in 1900-01. In 1908-09 it amounted to Rs. 23,30,955, of which Rs. 10,15,149 were derived from land revenue, Rs. 5,88,975 from stamps, Rs. 3,59,568 from cesses, Rs. 3,14,135 from excise and Rs. 53,124 from income-tax.

Land revenue.

The collections of land revenue amounted to Rs. 10,18,901 in 1880-81 to Rs. 10,15,130 in 1890-91 and to Rs. 10,14,535 in 1900-01. In 1908-09 they aggregated Rs. 10,14,436, collected from 676 estates, the current land revenue demand being Rs. 10,14,231, of which Rs. 10,10,431 were payable by 644 permanently settled estates, Rs. 3,477 by 27 temporarily settled estates and Rs. 323 by five Government estates held in direct management.

The total land revenue demand is equivalent to 16 per cent. of the gross rental of the district; and the incidence per cultivated acre is annas 11-7, as compared with Re. 1-0-4 in Dinājpur and annas 12-10 in Rājshāhi.

Stamps.

The receipts from the sale of judicial and non-judicial stamps rank next in importance as a source of revenue. They increased from Rs. 3,90,883 in 1892-93 to Rs. 4,51,313 in 1900-01, and rose still further to Rs. 5,74,553 in 1908-09. The increase is due to the steady growth both of the number and value of suits instituted in the civil courts, as well as of sales, mortgages, bonds and other miscellaneous transactions. Over 74 per cent. (Rs 3,91,920) of the receipts in 1908-09 were realised by the sale of judicial stamps, and, in particular, of court-fee stamps, while non-judicial stamps yielded Rs. 1,45,635, nearly the whole of this sum being due to the demand for impressed stamps.

Cesses.

Road and public works cesses are as usual, levied at the maximum rate of one anna in the rupee The current demand increased from Rs. 2,58,313 in 1895-96 to Rs. 2,80,622 in 1900-01 and the collections in 1908-09 amounted to Rs. 3,64,668, of which Rs. 3,45,346 was realised from revenue-paying estates, Rs. 4,887 *from revenue-free estates, and Rs. 14,435 from rent-free lands.* The number of estates assessed to cesses is 5,393, while the number of tenures is 51,769. The number of tenures assessed to cesses is thus nearly ten times the number of estates. The number of recorded shareholders of estates and tenures is 4,659 and 102,013 respectively. The valuation of landed property has increased by nearly 25 per cent. in fifteen years and the gross rental of the district is now calculated at Rs. 62,59,436.

Excise.

There has been an enormous expansion of excise revenue during the last fifteen years. In 1895-96 the total receipts were Rs. 1,90,089, in 1900-1901 Rs. 2,16,292 and in 1909-10 Rs. 3,09,838. Nearly half of this sum, *viz.*, Rs. 1,47,905, was obtained from the duty and license fees on country spirits. Next in importance is *gānja*, that is, the dried flowering tops of the cultivated female hemp plant (*Cannabis indica*) and the resinous exudation on them. This yielded Rs 1,05,037. The receipts from these two sources ten years ago (1899-1900) were Rs. 66,976 and Rs. 58,062 respectively. The great increase in consumption and revenue is due to the large influx of coolie immigrants from Behar, consequent on the introduction of railways and the development of trade In 1909-1910 the contract supply system displaced the previous out-still system. This has assured to the consumer a liquor of good quality and uniform strength, without lowering the price or diminishing the revenue.

Opium was formerly by far the most important source of excise revenue in Rangpur. From time immemorial the poppy plant was grown in the district and the people, both Hindus and Muhammadans, had been accustomed to use the drug largely, in

the form of *maddat*, a preparation of opium and spices, and, according to the authority of one Collector, even children took to it early, getting a taste of their parents' supply. On the introduction of the excise system in 1790, opium was grown only for the East India Company and it is said that the opium agents obtained only half the produce, the other half being retained by the cultivators for their own use. This system greatly encouraged the indulgence of the habit and the cultivation of contraband opium. In 1797 the agency was stopped and the further cultivation of the poppy was prohibited, but it took 25 years to eradicate its cultivation from the district. Raid after raid was carried out by successive Collectors and the poppy fields were ploughed up and destroyed. The ryots became turbulent and complaining, while the zamindārs, who had their profit in the venture, were lukewarm, when not openly hostile—as was the zamindār of Pānga in his jungle home, who encouraged the ryots to hide their ploughs, so that the Collector might not make use of them. On one occasion in 1822, 1,000 bighās of cultivation were destroyed and 1,000 persons convicted of the offence of illegal cultivation. Gradually the vast majority of the people had to shake off a habit which had hitherto cost very little to indulge, but now entailed the purchase of an expensive luxury. Still the habit died hard.* In 1871, the income from opium exceeded Rs. 1,40,000, while the income from all other excisable articles barely reached Rs. 40,000. Since then the yearly returns show a continuous decline: in 1895-96 the opium receipts were Rs. 83,247, in 1899-1900, Rs. 62,035, and in 1909-10, Rs. 52,167.

Among minor sources of revenue are *pachwai* (Rs. 1,459), a rice-beer which is brewed by the Santāls for domestic consumption; *tāri* (Rs. 137) which is the fermented aud unfermented palm sap; and imported liquor (Rs. 2,395). The receipts from this last source show a steady decrease since 1904-05, when the amount realised was Rs. 4,398. It has been suggested that this indicates a decrease in the consumption of foreign liquor owing to the Swadeshi movement. But it is probable that the decrease of revenue is due rather to the fact that many Indian consumers of the better class now procure their supplies from wine merchants in Calcutta rather than from the local shops.

The people of Rangpur do not compare unfavourably with other parts of the province in the matter of sobriety. The net excise revenue from all sources per ten thousand of the population of the district is Rs. 1,351, whereas the incidence for the Division is Rs. 1,711 and for the Province, Rs. 2,225.

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* When at one time it was thought possible to interdict or lessen the consumption of opium, and the Collector was called on by the Board to increase the use of spirits, he replied that though many had died from privation of opium, and others were in a lingering disease from the same cause, he could not induce them to take to spirits.—GLAZIER.

Income-tax.

In 1902-03, when the minimum assessable income was Rs. 500, the receipts from income-tax paid by 2,815 assessees, was Rs. 59,536. In 1903 the *minimum was raised to Rs. 1,000* giving relief to a number of petty traders, money-lenders and clerks. The number of assessees in 1903-04 consequently fell to 909 and the collections to Rs. 40,625. In 1908-09 the collections amounted to Rs. 53,128 paid by 1,089 assessees, among whom were 423 bankers and money-lenders, 394 merchants, 137 professional men (lawyers, doctors, etc.), and 51 persons earning fixed salaries. One person in every 1,863 of the population paid the tax—the divisional average being one in 1870.

Registration.

There are sixteen offices for the registration of assurances under Act III of 1877. The District Magistrate is the *ex-officio District Registrar. He is assisted in the supervision of the* rural offices by the Special Sub-Registrar, who is stationed at Rangpur. The average number of documents registered annually during the quinquennium ending 1909 shows an increase of more than 22 per cent. on the annual average for the preceding quinquennium. This appears to be due to an increasing appreciation of the benefits of registration, and this impression is confirmed by the large number of optional registrations effected in the district, which amount to about ⅛th of the total number. In 1909, 51,641 documents were presented as against 54,112 in the preceding year. The decrease was due to an improvement in agricultural conditions which were very unfavourable in 1908. The variation in the volume of operations under the Act is ordinarily a fair index to the condition of the agricultural population.

The marginal statement shows the number of documents registered and the receipts and expenditure at each office in 1909. The number of non-perpetual leases, (19,074) is greater than in any other district of the province, except Mymensingh, and the number of optional registrations relating to immoveable property (2,604) is greater than in all the other districts of the Division put together.

Name of office.	Total number of registrations.	Total receipts.	Total expenditure.
		Rs.	Rs.
Rangpur ...	5,102	9,256	7,845
Pirganj ...	2,084	1,699	1,617
Tushbhānder ...	4,179	3,881	1,724
Nilphamāri ...	4,270	4,429	2,505
Domār ...	4,728	4,888	2,491
Kishoreganj ...	3,031	2,854	1,801
Kurigrām ...	3,972	3,005	2,336
Ulipur ...	3,925	3,089	2,481
Gaibanda ...	5,156	4,756	2,637
Sundarganj ...	2,011	1,668	1,937
Gobindganj ...	4,730	4,112	2,607
Ditto, Joint			
Palāshbāri ...	3,457	2,696	1,598
Lālmonirhāt ...	2,630	2,082	1,665
Bādarganj ...	2,366	2,188	2,375
Total ..	51,641	Rs. 50,603	Rs. 35,619

Muhammadan Marriage Registration.

There are 18 Muhammadan Marriage Registrars authorised to register marriages and divorces under Act I of 1876. This kind of registration is entirely optional and is unfortunately not very popular. A more general resort to the safeguards thus provided, would go a great way to reduce the volume of litigation arising from disputes about marriage, which is at present large. But the Registrars meet with the most determined opposition from village mullās who ordinarily celebrate the marriages and with whose profits in the shape of marriage fees (*marchās*) such registration interferes. In 1909-10 the total number of marriages and divorces registered was 981, whereas it was 1,337 in the preceding year.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. Civil justice.

The staff entertained for the administration of civil justice consists of a District Judge, a Sub-Judge, and eight Munsiffs, *viz.*, two at Rangpur and two at each of the sub-divisional headquarters. The number of suits instituted in the Munsiffs' courts rose from 18,201 in 1901 to 27,278 in 1909; in the Sub-Judge's court, for the same dates, from 677 to 743, but the number was as high as 1,789 in 1893. The people, on the whole, are not given to unnecessary litigation and the work of the courts is comparatively light.

Criminal justice.

Until the year 1790 the Muhammadan criminal law was administered by Muhammadan officers; the European Magistrate made over to them for trial any offenders charged with the more serious offences, and had themselves only a small jurisdiction in petty cases. A Muhammadan officer, called the "*daroga* of the *adalat*," reported the cases to the Nāib Nāzim of Murshidabad, from whom came the orders in each case. But this procedure came to an end in 1790; and in overhauling the relics of the old system it came to light that among the 300 prisoners in irons who were in the Nāib Nāzim's jail at Mahiganj, there were between 90 and 100 men who were sentenced, not to any fixed term of imprisonment, but to be confined during the pleasure of the Judge. A few of them had been guilty of homicide, but the majority were sentenced for gang-robbery generally on their own confession made in the interior, a confession often repudiated in the presence of the *darogā* of the *adālat*. A number of the prisoners, however, were punished for house-breaking or theft only, and having been directed to restore the stolen property were confined indefinitely because they could not do so. In one case a man had been thirteen years in jail owing to his inability to comply with such an order, and in another, when the prisoner petitioned to be allowed to pay the value of the goods in cash, the complainant himself could not be found. The general punishments were the old Jewish one of forty stripes save one, cutting off the hand, and confinement either during pleasure or until the stolen property was restored. The first punishment, with imprisonment added, seems to have been

awarded even in cases of murder. In the matter of cutting off the hand, the prosecutor had a certain amount of option according to the usual tenour of barbarous laws. Sometimes he was given the choice of either getting back his property from the thief or having the man's hand taken off. In still more serious crimes the burden of a decision was thrown on a complainant instead of being accepted by the court. In 1795 there was a case in which by order of the court of circuit, the Magistrate called the father of a murdered person before him to ask whether he wished to pardon the murderer or demanded "blood for blood," and his claim for the full rigour of the law was duly reported.

Criminal justice is now administered by the Sessions Judge, the District Magistrate, Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates, and Honorary Magistrates. The sanctioned staff at Rangpur consists of the District Magistrate, four Deputy Magistrates of the first and one of the second class, and one Sub-Deputy Magistrate of the third class. The staff at each of the sub-divisions consists of the Sub-divisional Magistrate who exercises first class powers, and a Sub-Deputy Magistrate with second class powers. There are Benches of Honorary Magistrates at Rangpur and the sub-divisional towns, and an Honorary Magistrate at Domār and at Saidpur. In 1909, the stipendiary and the Honorary Magistrates disposed of 1,831 and 136 cases respectively. The total receipts in the shape of court-fee fines, process fees and copying and comparing fees amounted to Rs. 36,580, and the total charges were calculated at Rs. 79,163.

Crime.

The most prominent feature in the criminal returns of the district is the large number of offences relating to marriage and the abduction of women. This is due to the low standard of morality among the mass of the Muhammadans, the prevalence of polygamy and the numerical inferiority of females among them. As many as 457 cases of this kind were instituted in 1909, but only 13 resulted in conviction. The evidence in such cases is never satisfactory; it is often difficult to decide whose wife a woman is or whether she is the legal wife of any, when she has perhaps married man after man in succession, and between times lived in the bazaar, and has probably never been regularly divorced from any of her husbands. If there were a reasonable prospect of success, a far larger number of cases of this kind would undoubtedly be brought to the notice of the courts. Cases of rioting are fewer now than formerly and are rarely of a premeditated or organised character. The pitched battles between the forces of rival land-owners, which decided the possession of a *char* in former times, no longer disturb the public peace. As in every other district of the province, thefts and burglaries are numerous owing to the flimsy construction of houses, and in 1909 there were 42 cases of cattle-lifting. But there is little or no professional crime, properly so called. The murders and

crimes of violence that occur are usually prompted by malice. Recently, however, there has been a recrudescence of dacoity. The bad characters of several villages occasionally band together and raid outlying houses. The timidity of the people and their lack of self-help encourages such enterprises. In 1909, as many as 19 dacoities were reported. In one of these, the adult inmates of the house outnumbered the dacoits, who were only armed with *lāthis*, but they offered no resistance.

The total number of offences of which the courts took cognisance in 1909 was 6,659. Of these 1,673 were dismissed without trial and 214 were declared to be false. The sinister hand of the *dewānia*, whose function was explained in a previous chapter, may be traced in the increasing resort to pettifogging and vexatious litigation. There is reason for believing that a great deal of crime in the riparian and *char* areas of the Brahmaputra, in the east of the districts, is suppressed owing to the difficulty of reaching the authorities. The country here is inundated in the rainy season, and at other times it is a vast expanse of trackless sand.

POLICE.

Origin of the force.

An interesting account of the history of police administration in the district is given by Mr. Glazier in his "Further Notes on the Rangpur Records." Under the Muhammadan regimé, ans in the first years of the British administration, the zamindārd were responsible for the internal police of the country. The Collector had only a force of semi-military *barkandāz* to guard the public buildings and to act against large bodies of raiders, rioters and dacoits. In their engagements with the ruling power for the payment of land revenue, thé zamindārs bound themselves to apprehend murderers, robbers and generally all disturbers of the public peace. If they failed to apprehend the thief or recover the property stolen, they had to make good the loss. The farmer of land revenue incurred the same responsibility. Much crime was naturally hushed up. The formation of the police force took its rise from the abolition of the *sayer*, that is, from the time when market dues and other miscellaneous revenue assets were excluded from the zamindār's collections. The latter had collection agents at the different market-places, who also made arrangements for the protection of the public frequenting the markets. When this protection was withdrawn, the Magistrate, in 1790, made arrangements at the principal marts for the retention of a market police at the cost of the local traders. This system did not work well, especially in the case of the smaller market-places where business was transacted only once or twice a week and where there were no settled shopkeepers to be assessed. A more systematic plan of police was needed, and Regulation XXII of 1793 directed the Magistrates "to divide their respective *zillās*, into police jurisdictions, each jurisdiction to be 10 *kōsh* or 20 miles square." The district was then divided into *thānā*

jurisdictions, which, with considerable alternations, exist to the present day.

Origin of the *Chaukidāri* system.

The newly-constituted police has to labour under great difficulties *; not the least of which was the absence of any help from the village authorities. The zamindārs' *paiks* were wholly employed in collecting rents and gave no aid to the *darogās*. In this district there were no villages properly so called, no village system and no village *chaukidārs*. Every ryot put his house in a convenient position in the centre of his cultivation, surrounded by the houses of his relatives and dependents, and these small hamlets were scattered over the face of the country. What was called the village was a *mauza*, which is either an estate in itself or a part of one. The Magistrate in 1809 started a system of village watch by rotation, called the *gōlbandi*. This appears to have been indigenous to the district and to have originated in a levy *en-masse* of the population for their protection in the troublous times of the last years of Muhammadan Government. According to it, every eight families had to provide a watch of eight men, who patrolled during the night in companies of four men each. Closely allied to this was the *zanzīrabandi* or the "chain" system, by which every eight neighbours were to be mutually responsible for the conduct of one another and for the production of any one of themselves at any time. This naturally acted as a check on men of bad character: people felt in some measure responsible for the conduct of those together with whom they were bound, and whom they might be called on to produce at any time; and men of undoubtedly bad livelihood would find it difficult to get admission into any of these small unions, and would thus be marked out publicly as suspected. Government considered and condemned both these systems, and in 1817 issued Regulations XX, introducing the *chaukidāri* system which is now in force.

Present police organisation.

For police purposes the district is now divided into 16 *thānās* or police circles, *viz*., in the head-quarters sub-division, Kotwāli (183 square miles), Mahiganj with the out-post of Kāliganj (170), Mithāpūkur (198), Pīrganj (158), Bādarganj (167) and Kāliganj (365) in Gaibanda sub-division, Gaibanda with the out-post of Sadullapur (282), Gobindganj with the out-posts of Palāshbari and Shaghātta (351), and Sundarganj (129); in Nilphamāri sub-division, Nilphamāri with the out-post of Saidpur (214), Dimla with the out-post of Domār (192) and Jaldhāka (242); and in Kurigrām sub-division, Kurigrām (85), Ulipur with the road-post of Chilmāri (391), Lālmonirhāt (184) and Nāgeshwari with the road-post of Fulkumār (282). † In all there are 22 centres (stations and out-posts) for the investigation of crime. The regular police force

* Darogās or Sub-Inspectors were at first paid only 8 annas a day.

† Jaldhāka thānā was formerly known as Barūni, Nilphamāri as Darwāni, Kāliganj as Farunbāri, Gaibanda as Bhawāniganj, Mithāpūkur as Molong, Bādarganj as Kumārganj, and Lālmonirhāt as Bārobāri.

consisted in 1908 of one District Superintendent, one Deputy Superintendent, four Inspectors, 52 Sub-Inspectors, 64 head-constables and 392 constables—a total force of 514 men, representing one policeman to every 6·8 square miles and to every 4,191 of the population, as compared with the provincial average of 8·7 square miles and 2,858 of population. There is in addition a force of 29 town *chaukidārs* for the Municipality of Rangpur. The cost of maintaining the whole police force was Rs. 1,12,160. The rural force for the watch and ward of villages in the interior is composed of 425 *dafadārs* and 4,578 *chaukidārs*, who are paid at the rate of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a month respectively.

Jails.

The Nāib Nāzim's Jail, of Muhammadan times, was situated in Mahiganj It was a low-roofed thatched building standing in a small yard which was surrounded by a mud-wall. It was always crowded and in an unwholesome state On several occasions prisoners escaped by cutting through the wall. The jail system also needed reform in many respects. The prisoners messed themselves, receiving an allowance of from 2 to 3 pice a day for the purpose, and from this a deduction was made to pay for the oil-light at night. Their private property was also liable to be sold on their entrance into jail as a reward to the informers by whose means they had been brought there. These abuses were soon remedied, but there was one which was untouched for a long time, and that was the insufficient pay of the *darogā* and his *darwāns*. While police *darogās* were to exhibit all the virtues for eight annas a day, the jail *darogā* was expected to do the same for half the price, and the *darwāns* were to be models of honesty on a pittance of one anna a day, that is, the jailor got Rs. 7 a month and the *darwāns* Rs. 2. Their pay was trebled in 1816.

The present district jail at Rangpur was built in 1795 and has accommodation for 239 prisoners, *viz.*, barracks for 176 male convicts, 13 female convicts, 26 under-trial prisoners and 7 civil prisoners, cells for 4 male convicts, and a hospital with 13 beds. The daily average of jail population in 1909 was 227. There are subsidiary jails at the sub-divisional towns of Gaibanda, Nilphamāri and Kurigrām with accommodation for 18, 12 and 17 prisoners respectively. The average daily population at these jails in 1909 was 16, 16·5 and 13 respectively. The principal industries on which convicts are employed in the district jail are oil-pressing, *surki*-pounding, jute and aloe string-making, paddy-husking, wheat and pulse-grinding and cloth-weaving.

Volunteers.

There is a company of the Eastern Bengal State Railway Volunteer Corps, 157 strong, at Saidpur.

Public Works.

The Public Works of the district, which consist mainly of public buildings and offices and a portion of the Dhubri Road, 8 miles in length, are in charge of a Sub-Divisional officer, subordinate to the Executive Engineer of the Jalpaiguri Public Works Division.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

DISTRICT BOARD.

The administration of local affairs, outside the municipal area of Rangpur, is vested, since 1887, in the District Board and the four subordinate Local Boards of Sadr, Gaibanda, Nilphamāri and Kurigrām. The District Board consists of 21 members, the Sadr Local Board of 12, and the other Local Boards of 7 each. Eleven of the members of the District Board are appointed and the rest are elected by the Local Boards. In 1909-10, 9 of the members were officials, including two Europeans. The Muhammadan community is adequately represented, there being nine members on the District Board and 20 on the Local Boards. The control of ferries, pounds and dispensaries, the sanitation of subdivisional towns, and the improvement of village roads has been delegated to the Local Boards.

INCOME.

The average annual income of the District Board during the ten years ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 2,23,643, of which Rs. 1,20,318 was contributed by the Provincial rates. Since the transfer of the district to the new Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, the average income for the four years ending 1908-09 was Rs. 3,02,693, of which Rs. 1,60,363 represents road-cess, Rs. 54,151 Government contributions, Rs. 13,802 pound receipts, and Rs. 42,720 ferry receipts. In 1909-10 the opening balance was Rs. 86,151 and the receipts of the year Rs 3,18,564, to which road-cess contributed Rs. 1,62,522, Government grants Rs. 66,876, pounds Rs. 15,397 and ferries Rs. 48,454. Road-cess is the principal source of income, the incidence of taxation being 18 annas per head of population as compared with the Divisional incidence of 17 annas and the Provincial of 19 annas. The ferries controlled by the Board number over 140 and constitute a very important and growing source of income, the yield having risen to the present figure from Rs. 21,929 in 1871 and Rs. 34,693 in 1887, in spite of the construction of numerous bridges and the consequent abolition of many ferries. The receipts from pounds, of which there are now 203, on the other hand, are unusually low for a district of the size and population of Rangpur. This is due to the circumstance that the Board does not own any pound sites in the mofussil and, as farmers are required to provide the sites themselves, competition is greatly restricted.

EXPENDITURE.

The average annual expenditure during the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 2,13,513, of which Rs. 1,17,669 was spent on civil works, Rs. 47,993 on education and Rs. 3,621 on medical relief. During the four years ending in 1908-09, it amounted to

Rs. 2,96,774, of which Rs. 1,74,431 was devoted to civil works, Rs. [illegible],870 to education and Rs. 17,147 to medical relief.

The heaviest charge on the income of the Board is, of course the maintenance of communications. It now maintains 17 miles of metalled road, 1,207 miles of unmetalled road, and 1,170 of village road. The cost of maintaining these three classes of roads in 1909-10 was Rs. 586, Rs 54 and Rs. 23 per mile respectively. The number of schools maintained or aided by the Board is 1,095 with an attendance of 33,895 pupils; these comprise 899 Lower Primary, 152 Upper Primary, 22 Middle Vernacular, 21 Middle English schools and one Industrial or Technical school. The Board spends 7·2 per cent. of its ordinary income, as compared with a Divisional average of 5·8 per cent on dispensaries, of which it maintains 11 and aids 8; and it entertains three travelling Sub-Assistant Surgeons for giving medical relief to areas affected by epidemic disease and to the people attending village *hāts*. The Board also maintains a Veterinary Dispensary at Rangpur and the Veterinary Assistant goes into the interior to attend to outbreaks of cattle disease. In 1908-09 the Board spent Rs. 9,610 on water-supply and Rs. 2,685 on road-side arboriculture.

MUNICIPALITY.

Rangpur is the only municipal town in the district. The Municipality was established in 1869 and is administered by a Municipal Board of 18 Commissioners, of whom two-thirds are elected and one-third nominated. The area within municipal limits is 9·3 square miles and the population according to the census of 1901 is 15,960. The number of rate payers is 2,527, representing 15 8 per cent. of the population, as compared with the Divisional average of 19·8 per cent. The municipal area is divided into two wards, *viz.*, Nawābganj and Mahiganj. The income of the Municipality in 1870—the second year of its existence—was Rs. 6,430. The average income for the decade ending 1901-02 was Rs 31,380 5 and the expenditure Rs. 26,437·1; and in the quinquennium ending in 1906-07 they were Rs. 50,260·4 and Rs. 43,489 respectively.

INCOME.

A revision of the assessment has been recently made and a tax on holdings and land substituted for the former tax on persons. This has been given effect to from the 1st of April 1909 and has resulted in an enhancement in the demand of direct taxes of Rs. 6,815. In 1909-10 the receipts amounted to Rs. 43,829 in addition to an opening balance of Rs. 1,914. Of this sum Rs. 11,261 was realised from the tax on holdings and Rs. 11,585 from the latrine tax. Both these taxes are assessed at the rate of 6 per cent. on the annual value of holdings. The other important sources of revenue are taxes on vehicles and animals (Rs. 6,138) and the lease of municipal lands (Rs. 2,537). Government grants during the year amounted to Rs. 5,833. The incidence of taxation was Re. 1-13-11 per head of population as against Re. 1-9-4 during the previous year, under the old assess-

Expenditure.

The expenditure in 1909-10 was Rs. 42,787. The municipal authorities are greatly handicapped by the large area of the town and its configuration. It is 7 miles long, with a varying width of from half a mile to a mile, and is confined between marshes on the north and the stagnant Ghāghāt on the south. The populated portions of Nawābganj and Mahiganj are three miles apart and the intervening area is of a rural rather than an urban character. Arrangements for conservancy, lighting, etc., are therefore more costly than they would be in a compact town. The municipality has to maintain two dispensaries, one in each portion of the town. The normal proportion of income devoted to medical relief is greater than in any other Municipality in the Division. In 1909-10, Rs. 13,998 was spent on conservancy, Rs. 9,228 on hospitals and dispensaries, Rs. 2,758 on lighting, Rs. 2,029 on civil works, Rs. 1,744 on drainage and Rs. 1,750 on education. These figures represent 36·7, 24 2, 7·22, 3·1, 5 9 and 4·1 respectively of the total expenditure during the year.

The most pressing need of the Municipality is a thorough system of drainage. This is a matter which has attracted the attention of the authorities from the earliest times, and has not yet been satisfactorily dealt with. The Magistrate, Mr. Wordsworth, in 1800, submitted proposals for draining "the extensive pieces of low marshy land and stagnant water, the stench from which at particular seasons of the year is extremely offensive and the exhalations from which must be highly prejudicial." He also drew attention to the numerous groves of bamboo and jungle which prevented the free circulation of air and harboured noxious insects. The state of things is very much the same now, after the lapse of 110 years. In recent times, endeavours have been made to devise a scheme of drainage in connection with the larger project for draining the Kūkrul, Chiklī and other extensive *bhīls* in the vicinity of the town, but without any tangible result. A stricter and more intelligent observance of building regulations is necessary, if any improvement is to be expected in the appearance of the town, which at present is anything but imposing or smart. Another important requirement is the construction of a new road from the civil station to the railway station. This is receiving the attention of the Commissioners. A further account of the present state of the town will be found in the article on Rangpur in Chapter XIV.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

ess of ation.

A good idea of the state of education in the district in early times is obtained from the following extract from an early report* on vernacular education:—

"The answers made by the *Kanoongoes* of the district to the circular inquiries of the General Committee in 1823 afford some information on which apparently dependence may be placed. It would appear that in fourteen out of nineteen sub-divisions (police circuits) of the district there were no elementary schools whatever, and that in the remaining five, there were ten Bengali schools and two Persian ones for elementary instruction. In some of the sub-divisions having no common schools, parents to supply the want of them, either employ teachers in their own houses, in whose instructions the children of neighbouring families are allowed to participate, or themselves instruct their own children. The employment of a private tutor and still more parental instruction would appear to be very common. In some instances Hindus are mentioned as teachers of Persian schools, and Muhammadans of Bengali ones. In these schools the monthly payment for the instruction of any one boy is from two to four and eight annas and even one rupee. The number of boys in one school did not exceed twelve, and there was sometimes as small a number as three taught by one master. In this district the boys are described as attending school from their seventh or eighth to their fifteenth year. The *Kanoongoes* almost uniformly speak of the advantage which the district would derive from the encouragement given to education by Government. As regards indigenous schools of learning, Buchanan says that a few Brahmans have acquired sufficient skill in astronomy to construct an almanac, and five or six *pandits* instruct youths in a science named *āgam* or magic, comprehending astrology and chiromancy. The latter is reckoned a higher science than the calculation of nativities, and is monopolised by the sacred order. The Muhammadans, he adds, having no wise men of their own, consult those of the Hindus. This account of the state of learning is very unfavourable and is not quite correct. The *āgamā shāstra* does not merely teach astrology and chiromancy, but is also occupied with the ritual observances of modern Hinduism, and it is not the only branch of learning taught in these schools. From the details furnished by the *kanoongoes*, it appears that in nine sub-divisions of the district

* Adam's Report on Vernacular Education, section XVII.

there are 41 schools of Sanskrit learning, containing each from 5 to 25 scholars, who are taught grammar, general literature, rhetoric, logic, law, mythological poems and astronomy, as well as *āgama shāstrā*. The students often prosecute their studies till they are thirty-five and even forty years of age, and are almost invariably the sons of Brahmans. They are supported in various ways—first, by the liberality of those learned men who instruct them; secondly, by the presents received on occasions of invitation to religious festivals and domestic celebrations; thirdly, by their relations at home; and fourthly, by begging—recourse being had to one means when others fail. The instructors are enabled to assist their pupils, sometimes from their own independent means, sometimes from the occasional gifts they receive from others, and sometimes from the produce of small endowments. At least ten are stated to have small grants of land for the support of learning, one of these consisting of 25 bighas of *brahmattar* land and another of 176 bighas of *lakhirāj* land. In one instance it is stated that the owner of the estate on which the school is situated gave the *pandit* a yearly present of 32 rupees, and in another instance a monthly allowance of 5 or 8 rupees. In a third instance the *pandit* of the school lived on his patrimony, and at the same time acted as family priest to the zamindār."

The Muhammadan and Rājbansi communities, who form the bulk of the population, have not been quick to appreciate the advantages of education; and for a long time there was a strong prejudice even among the higher classes against English education and the education of females. In 1856-57 there were only 21 Government and aided schools with an attendance of 971 pupils. This did not include a large number of indigenous rural schools which were of two kinds, namely, *patshālās* and *maktābs* or Muhammadan schools. In the former, the running hand of the country, simple arithmetics and bazar account-keeping were taught in the vernacular. These village schools were often nothing more than groups of five or six boys who collected for two or three hours a day at the village shop and got a little elementary instruction from the half-educated shop-keeper. In the *maktābs* the Koran, Arabic and, sometimes, Persian were taught. They were often held in mosques or in the house of some comparatively wealthy Muhammadan villager who could afford to keep a Maulvi or Akhun and to let his neighbours' sons come and learn with his children. The attendance in these schools was naturally very irregular, and their existence often ephemeral. By 1871, the number of recognised schools had risen to 263 with a total of 5,227 pupils. It is worthy of note that at this time there were 28 night *patshālās* for day-labourers, the teachers being the same as those for day *patshālās*, with an extra monthly allowance of one rupee for every ten scholars. These institutions were not a success and were discontinued. After 1870,

the number of village schools was largely augmented under the improved system of Primary Education inaugurated by Sir George Campbell, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, by which grants-in-aid were made to a large number of hitherto unaided vernacular schools, and in 1883 the number of schools under inspection rose to 860, with an attendance of over 17,000. Since then education has advanced with rapid strides. In 1900-01 there were 1,003 institutions and 31,000 scholars, and at the present day there are 1,179 schools of all kinds with 43,979 pupils. The expenditure on education shows a corresponding advance, being Rs. 5,870 in 1856-57, Rs. 45,090 in 1870-71 and Rs. 1,65,016 in 1900-1901. To the amount spent in the last-named year Government contributed 10 per cent., the District Board 29 per cent., the Municipality 5 per cent., and fees and private contributions made up the balance.

Literate population.

The general level of education, as in the rest of the Rajshahi Division, is nevertheless very low. In 1881 the proportion of males found to be literate, *i.e.*, able to read and write, was 5·74 per cent., in 1891 it was 6·04 per cent., and in 1901 it had risen to 6·4 per cent; the corresponding figures in the case of females for 1891 and 1901 were 8 and 20 in 10,000 respectively. In the year last named 72,599 persons or 3·5 per cent. of the population (6·4 males and 0·2 females) could read and write. These figures are very much below the Provincial average. The largest proportion is, of course, found in the head-quarters and sub-divisional thānās of Rangpur, Mahiganj, Nilphamāri, Kurigrām and Gaibanda. Nilphamāri, which contains several important trading centres, has a proportion of 5·1 literates, and the percentage among Muhammadans is higher here (8·7) than in any other thānā. Education is at its lowest ebb in the thānās of Jaldhāka (2·2), Nāgeshwari (2·25) and Ulipur (2·2). These thānās are furthest removed from the head-quarters towns and from railway communication. The Hindus of Jaldhāka and the Muhammadans of Nāgeshwari are the most backward in the district. The Hindus as a whole are far more advanced, from the educational point of view, than the Muhammadans, the proportion of male literates being nearly twice, and of female literates quite four times as great in the case of the former. At the census of 1901, the district could muster only 3,501 persons (including 452 Christians) who could read and write English—Jaldhāka thānā being the lowest in the scale with 27 only. Outside the Sadr and sub-divisional thānās there were barely 1,000 persons who could be included in this class.

General statistics.

In 1909-10 the number of public institutions was 1,177 and the number of pupils attending them was 43,957, representing 13·6 per cent. of school-going age (25·5 per cent. of boys and 2·7 per cent. of girls); of these 67·4 per cent. were Muhammadans, 32·5 per cent. Hindus, and one per cent. native Christians, Buddhists,

and others. There were also two private institutions with an attendance of 22 pupils.

The educational staff consisted of a District Deputy Inspector of Schools and three Sub-divisional Deputy Inspectors of Schools subordinate to the Inspector of Schools, Rājshāhi Division; and of eleven Sub-Inspectors of Schools. The District Deputy Inspector of Schools is the chief executive officer of the Department in the district and the educational adviser of the District Magistrate. He is responsible for the state of Middle and Primary Education of the Sadr Sub-division, while the Sub-divisional Deputy Inspectors of Schools are responsible for the same in their sub-divisions. The Sub-Inspectors of Schools are entrusted with the supervision of Primary schools.

SECONDARY EDUCATION.

There is no collegiate institution in the district. The Secondary Schools include both High and Middle Schools. The former teach up to the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University; and the latter up to the fifth class of High Schools; but to all of them Primary departments are attached. A High School thus represents all stages of instruction from the Lower Primary to the University Examination Standard, and a Middle School, all stages from the Lower Primary to the fifth class of High Schools. In short, a High School is a Middle School, with four additional higher classes; a Middle School is an Upper Primary School, with two higher classes; and an Upper Primary School is equivalent to a Lower Primary School, with two additional classes attached to it.

High Schools.

There are eight High Schools for boys with an attendance of 1,515 pupils in the district. Of these, there is one at the Sadar head-quarters—the Zilla School—with 252 pupils on the rolls, which is maintained by Government. This school was founded in 1832 by the zamindārs of the district who raised a voluntary subscription of Rs. 25,000, the Raja of Cooch Behar giving a very commodious brick-house. It was opened by Lord Bentinck, the only Governor-General who has visited the district. There are three High Schools with 644 pupils at the three sub-divisional head-quarters, *viz.*, Kurigrām, Gaibanda and Nilphamāri, aided by the Government; and four unaided schools with 619 pupils at Saidpur, Kākina, Ulipur and Tājhāt. The last three schools are maintained by the zamindārs of Kākina, Bāharband and Tājhāt respectively.

Middle English Schools.

There are 31 Middle English Schools with 2,587 pupils on the rolls. Of these 21 with 1,641 pupils are aided from public funds and 10 with 946 pupils are unaided.

MIDDLE VERNACULAR SHOOLS.

The Middle Vernacular Schools teach up to the Middle Scholarship course through the medium of the vernacular. There were 31 Middle Vernacular Schools with an attendance of 1,910 pupils. Of these, one practising School attached to the Rangpur Training School is maintained by Government, 22 receive grants-in-aid and 8 are unaided. This class of school is gradually declining in popularity owing to the preference shown by parents for English education.

PRIMARY EDUCATION.

There are altogether 1,009 Primary Schools for boys with 35,220 pupils on the rolls and 86 schools for girls with an attendance of 2,062 pupils. Of the boys' Primary Schools, 153 are Upper Primary and 856 are Lower Primary Schools with an attendance of 6,745 and 28,475 respectively. Of the Upper Primary Schools for boys three were practising schools, attached to the Guru Training Schools at Kurigrām, Gaibanda and Nilphamāri; of the rest, 149 were aided and one was unaided. Of the Lower Primary Schools for boys, 74 were Board Lower Primary schools maintained by the District Board, 742 were aided and 40 were unaided.

Of the girls' Primary Schools there were three Upper Primary and 83 Lower Primary Schools, with 118 and 1,944 pupils on the rolls respectively.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

There were altogether twelve special schools with an attendance of 663 pupils on the rolls. These include four Training Schools with 99 pupils maintained by the Government, *viz.*, the Rangpur Training School for the training of the Head Pandits of Middle Schools and three Guru Training Schools at the three sub-divisional head-quarters, *viz.*, Kurigrām, Gaibanda and Nilphamāri, for the training of the teachers of Primary Schools.

There is one Industrial School at Rangpur, *viz.*, the Bailey Govinda Lal Technical School, which is under the direct management of the District Board. It is affiliated to the Sibpur Engineering College, and has four departments, *viz.*, the Sub-Overseer, the Amin, the Artizan and Agricultural. It has six teachers including a carpenter-teacher for the artizan class and a blacksmith. The roll number on the 31st March 1907 was 97, of whom 60 were Hindus, 33 Muhammadans and 4 Buddhists Of the total number of students, about 25 were in the Sub-Overseer class, 44 in the Amin class, 10 in the Artizan class, 13 belonged to "B" classes of the Rangpur Zilla School and 3 were in the Agricultural class. There is a boarding-house attached to the school for Hindu students.

There are four *madrasas* in the district with 373 pupils for the study of Arabic and Persian. Of these two are aided and the other two are unaided. Among the aided *madrasas*, the Rangpur Madrasa is the leading institution. It teaches up to the Junior Standard of the *Madrasa* Examination and receives grants-in-aid both from the District Board and the Mohsin Funds. There are altogether 3 *tōls* with 44 pupils on the rolls; two aided by the District Board and one unaided. Among the *tōls* the Rangpur *tōl*, which sends up pupils to the Sanskrit Title Examination, is worthy of mention.

HOSTELS.

There were altogether six hostels in the district. Of these, two, attached to the Rangpur Training School and Kurigrām Guru Training School, are maintained by the Education Department; one attached to the Rangpur Technical School, is maintained by the District Board; of the remaining three, two (one for the Hindus and the other for the Muhammadans), are attached to the

Nilphamāri H. E. school and one is attached to the Kurigrām H. E. school. All of these are aided by the Department.

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS.

The private institutions are those which do not conform to the standards recognised by the Education Department. These institutions are divided into four classes, *viz*, (1) Advanced, teaching Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit or any other Oriental classics; (2) Elementary, teaching a vernacular only, or mainly (3) Elementary, teaching the Koran, and (4) other schools not conforming to the departmental standards. In this district there were only two private institutions for boys with 22 pupils on the rolls, *viz.*, one Advanced, teaching Arabic and Persian, and the other Elementary, teaching a vernacular only.

Female Education

Dr. Buchanan in 1809 remarked that "it is considered highly improper, in Rangpur, to bestow literary education on women and no man would marry a girl who was known to be capable of reading; for it is believed that no man will live long who has a wife who knows too much." The prejudice wore out gradually. The *Rangpur Bartabaha* took up the cause of female education and the first girls' school was started at Gopālpur, the educated daughter of the zamindār of Kūndi undertaking the duties of a mistress. To Rangpur belongs the credit of introducing the first text-book for the use of girls. Babu Kali Chandra Roy Chaudhury, zamindār of Kūndi, advertised a reward of Rs. 50 for a treatise on the fidelity and chastity of women, and the "Patibrātopākhyan" published and distributed at his cost in 1852 A. D, was the result.

There are altogether 4,185 girls under instruction in the district, of whom 2,154 attended the boys' schools and 2,031 attended the girls' schools. In 1901 the percentage of female scholars to female population of school-going age was one per cent.; now it is over 2 per cent. The number of Upper Primary Schools for girls is three with 118 pupils on the rolls. Of these, one, *viz*, Munshipara Girls' School is attended by Muhammadan girls only. There are 83 Lower Primary girls' schools with an attendance of 1,944 pupils. Of these, two are Model girls' schools maintained by the Department; 78 are aided and 3 are unaided. The number of Muhammadan girl-pupils was almost equal to that of Hindu.

Muhammadan Education

The number of Muhammadan pupils under instruction in all classes of schools is 29,636, representing 67·4 per cent of the total number of pupils. This is slightly in excess of the percentage which represents the Muhammadan portion of the population of the district. There are now more than two Muhammadan students to one Hindu. In 1880 there were four Muhammadan pupils to every three Hindu. In the race for education, the Muhammadan has caught up and passed his Rajbansi brother, but neither can be regarded as a very speedy competitor.

Education of aboriginal races.

There is no special school for aboriginal races in the district; but 30 aboriginal students, chiefly Santāls, were educated along with Hindus and Muhammadans in four or five Lower Primary Schools in the year 1909-10.

CHAPTER XIV.

GAZETTEER.

Baharband Estate.—The *parganā* of Bāharband formed part of Koch kingdom till, in 1603, when Raja Parikshit was the ruler, it was conquered and annexed by the Mughals. Bāharband and *Bhitarband were formed into the Sarkār of Bengal-bhum.* When the English administration began, the *parganā* was included in Rājshāhi district, but in 1772 it was transferred to Rangpur and has ever since continued to form part of the district, with the exception of one year, 1786-87, when, together with Idrākpur, it was formed into the small district of Ghorāghāt. The estate, at present, includes also the *parganā* of Goālbāri and a portion of Bhitarband. The latter *parganā* did not come into the district till after the Permanent Settlement.

From an account sent to the Committee of Revenue by Mr. Goodlad, when Collector of Ghorāghāt, it appears that Bāharband was nominally entered in the name of the Natore Raja, but was also held from time to time as a *jāgīr* by Muhammadans. There are several traditions about the members of the Natore family who owned this property, and especially about Rani Satyabati and Rani Bhavāni. The piety and benevolence of these ladies is still remembered and at Dhāmsreni, a couple of miles to the north-east of Ulipur, there is a colony of Brāhmans who enjoy the rent-free lands bestowed by them on their ancestors. Their extensive charities, however, were not in keeping with their income. The estate was then largely under jungle and thinly inhabited, and difficulties were experienced in paying the Government revenue ; and in 1782, Bissen Churn Nandy obtained a five years' farm of it, probably as *benāmdār* for Krishna Kānta Nandy, who was Warren Hastings' *banian* and the founder of the Kāsimbazār Raj family. His successor Lokenāth Nandy, son of Krishna Kānta Nandy, is spoken of as zamindār in the settlement papers, the old nominal possessors being thus finally ousted. "Lokenāth," says Mr. Glazier, "was the first of the zamindārs of the district who obtained a permanent settlement, which came to pass in this wise. The average collections during the five years' farm were Rs. 95,781, and at its expiration the settlement was offered to Lokenāth at the average of the three preceding years' collections ; but this he declined and for two years, 1184-85 B. S., the estate was managed by a *sezāwal*, who only collected Rs. 80,525 the first year, and Rs. 82,639 the second. Then Lokenāth, with great astuteness, came forward and offered to take the estate at the latter rate on a permanent lease, which offer was accepted by the

Governor-General in Council, in a letter of October 20th, 1779, signed by Hastings, Barwell, Francis, Wheeler and Coote. The sanad recites Bāharband, Bhitarband and Goālbāri as included in the grant." The Directors, who had not yet made up their minds as to the revenue policy to be adopted, sent out peremptory orders to cancel the settlement, but nothing of the kind was done. The Government revenue, including the permanent assessment of fisheries in the Brahmaputra, Tista, Dharla and other rivers, is now Rs 84,160-10-5.

The Bāharband zamindār wast he only one in Rangpur, who had a large private fortune, and he began at once that course of scientific administration which has rendered his zamindāri one of the best managed in the district In 1189 and 1190 B. S., he carried out a new measurement and assessment, which relieved the lesser ryots at the expense of the more powerful ones, who had by unfair means got the best lands into their possession at the least rent Some of the latter went to Calcutta and lodged a complaint, and the Committee ruled that the zemindār's office did not confer any right of making a survey or changing the mode of assessment or collection, without the previous permission of Government Notwithstanding this apparently adverse ruling, the zamindār in the end made good his point. The tradition of fair and methodical administration has been maintained by his successors, and especially the late Mahārani Sarnamayi, M.I O., C I., who is remembered for her charities and works of public utility. The present proprietor is the Hon'ble Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy.

The estate covers an area of approximately 350 square miles in the sub-divisions of Kurigrām and Gaibanda. Most of the land is now clear of jungle and under cultivation, thanks to the persistence and industry of settlers from Pabna, Faridpur and Dacca; but a considerable area consists of newly-formed sand-banks. The land is fertile and the climate healthy. The head office is at Ulipur, where the estate maintains a dispensary and a High School. The greater part of the estate is settled with tenure-holders for terms of years, and the gross-rental is Rs. 3,70,533. Jute and rice are the chief crops grown and the condition of the peasantry is prosperous, as rents are comparatively low. Educationally, the people are very backward and the *parganā* is a great stronghold of *dewānias*.

Bardhankote Estate.—The history of this estate is of interest, because it once formed part of the large zamindāri of Ghorāghāt, which comprised the greater part of Dinājpur district, a portion of Rangpur in the south and nearly the whole of the districts of Malda and Bogra. The city of Ghorāghāt was once the seat of the Eastern Mughal Government, with a revenue of ninety lakhs of rupees. It was the base from which the Rangpur *chaklās* were overrun at the close of the seventeenth century.

The site of the city is on the left bank of the Karatoya, in Dinājpur district and on the Rangpur boundary. Extensive ruins, buried in the thick jungle, still exist. Of the earliest zamindārs, who were known as Rājas and were doubtless the rulers of the country, we possess no information. After the Muhammadan conquest, they continued in possession, and it is said that the partition of the zamindāri into Idrākpur and Dinājpur came about in this way. Raja Bhagwān was an idiot, and his *dewān*, who had the same name, took advantage of his weakness to intrigue with the Subadar of Dacca, with the result that he was declared the lawful owner of the estate. A long dispute ensued, which terminated in the division of the zamindāri. the lawful owner receiving nine annas—Idrākpur, or "nine annas Ghorāghāt," and the usurper seven—Dinājpur or "seven annas Ghorāghāt," a great part of which still belongs to the present Dinājpur Raj. The date of this partition cannot now be ascertained. It was confirmed by the Emperor Aurangzeb in 1677 A.D.

The revenue assessed on Idrākpur at the time of the decennial settlement was Rs. 1,60,196, but the estate collapsed early under the severity with which the collections of revenue were made. Idrākpur disappeared from the map and its place was taken by a number of small estates, of which the Bardhankote estate,* comprising ten mahals in Gobindganj and adjoining thānās and paying a revenue of Rs. 7,727, is all that remains to the descendants of Raja Bhagwān.

The present proprietor is Babu Chandra Kishore Ray who resides in the village of Bardhankote, near Gobindganj, which appears to be a place of great antiquity. The historian of Bakhtyār Khilji's invasion of Kuchwāra in 1203 A.D., says that that general was guided to a "country, the town whereof is called Abardhān. It is said that this town was founded by the Emperor Garshasp." Abardhān has been identified as Bardhankote, and Garshasp was probably a Scythian or Tartar prince. Some ruins exist in the vicinity of the village including those of two temples,† which, from the inscriptions, appear to have been built by Raja Bhagwān in 1601 A.D.

Dimla Estate.—The Dimla Estate is one of the largest in the district. The family belongs to the Dakhin Rārhi class of Kāyasths, and claims descent from Jagat Ballav Sen, who, early in the eighteenth century, held an administrative appointment under the Nawāb of the *Sarkār* of Orissa. His grandson, Hara Ram Sen, on whom the Nawāb bestowed the title of "Babu"—an honorific title distinct from the common modern term of address—was collector or farmer of revenue in North Bengal in the time of

* The site of the ruins of Ghorāghāt is included in this estate, but not the modern village of that name.

Nawab Aliverdi Khān, Subadār of Bengal. In 1770 he came to Rangpur and settled at Mahiganj. The famine of 1787-88 had impoverished many of the zamindārs, and Hara Lal Sen obtained settlement of several of the estates which came under the hammer for arrears of revenue. His son Rāmjiban Sen was confirmed in the possession of these estates at the Permanent Settlement and was succeeded in 1807 by his son Joyrām. The latter dying without issue, the property devolved on his widow Shyama Sundari Chaudhurani. For a period of ten years, it was found necessary, owing to difficulties with the tenants, to place the administration of the estate in the hands of the Court of Wards. This lady adopted Janaki Ballav Sen and he succeeded to the property on her death. The title of Raja was conferred on him in 1891 in recognition of his public services and benefactions Among the latter may be mentioned the canal which bears his adoptive mother's name and the Hindu Sanatorium at Darjiling. He died in 1890, when the present proprietor Rājkumār Jāmini Ballav Sen succeeded to the estate.

The estate comprises properties in the Rangpur, Bogra, Dinājpur and other districts, but the greater part of it lies in the Nilphamāri sub-division of Rangpur The annual Government revenue is Rs. 39,500 and the gross-rental Rs. 2,38,000. The estate maintains a charitable dispensary at Dimla.

Domar.—A small town in the Nilphamāri sub-division and a station on the northern section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, in 26° 6′ and 88° 50′ E At the census of 1901 the population was 1,868. A police out-post and a sub-registry office are located here. The Sub-Registrar is an Honorary Magistrate. There is also a Middle English School and a charitable dispensary. Domar has acquired all the trade which was formerly centred at the ancient mart of Ghorāmāra on the Tista. There are several firms engaged in the baling and export of jute The greater part of the labour employed is recruited locally, but about 200 upcountry coolies have settled in the east end of the town.

Fulchari.—A small town in the Gaibanda sub-division, situated on the right bank of the Brahmaputra river, in 25° 12′ N. and 89° 37′E. It is a port of call for Assam river steamers, and is the terminus of the Santahār—Fulchāri Branch Railway. The population in 1901 was 2,782. The town possess a ginning factory and a steam oil-mill, and enjoys a large export trade, particularly in jute. About 8,000 maunds of cleaned *kapās* cotton was sent to Calcutta from this station in 1909.

Gaibanda.—Head-quarters town of the sub-division of the same name, situated on the Ghāghāt river in 25° 21′ N. and 89° 34′ E. The population in 1901 was 1,005. The town was of no importance till it was made the head-quarters of the sub-division in 1875. The name is said to be derived from *gai*, cow, and *bāndha*, tying. Its growth has been largely handicapped by the

fact of its being hemmed in by bl.... .... low-lying land, which hinder expansion. Building sites have to be constructed artificially, and in the rains the whole town is in a more or less water-logged condition. The population and trade have increased considerably since the opening of the Bonārpara-Kaunia Extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway.

The towns contain the sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a jail, a dispensary, a High School, a *madrasa*, a sub-registry office, and an Inspection bungalow. There is also a Town Hall and Public Library, in connection with which is a Club for Indian gentlemen.

Gaibanda Sub-division.—The southern sub-division of the Rangpur district, lying on the right bank of the Brahmaputra between 25° 3′ and 25° 39′ N., and 89° 12′ and 89° 42′ E., with an area of 762 square miles. The central and greater portion of the sub-division consists of rich *poli* land; in the west is a strip of *khiyār* country and along the east are alluvial deposits of the Brahmaputra of remarkable fertility. There are reasons for believing that formerly an immense river flowed through this sub-division, and that the present villages of Ghorāghāt and Tulsighāt lying 15 miles apart, stood on opposite banks of it.* Its place is now taken by a number of small rivers, including the Karatoya the Akhira, the Kātakhāli, the Ghāgbāt, the Alai, the Nahāli and the Bangāli. Most of these streams were badly damaged in the earthquake of 1897. In the north-east, the sub-division is watered by the Mura Manas and other offshoots of the lower Tista The principal productions are jute and paddy, but sugar-cane is grown in the west and tobacco in the north. The Santahār—Fulchāri Brānch and the Kaunia Extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway traverse the eastern parts of the sub-division.

The sub-division when first constituted in 1857 was known as the Bhāwaniganj sub-division, with head-quarters at Bhawaniganj, near the Brahmaputra, the civil courts being at Badiakhali About 1873, Bhawāniganj fell before the westward march of the unrelenting Brahmaputra and the sub-division was reconstituted with a slightly reduced area and named after its new head-quarter town, Gaibanda, to which also the civil courts were transferred The late Mahārāni Sarnamayi of Kāsimbazār, the proprietress of the Bāharband Estate, made a free gift of the lands required for the public buildings at Gaibanda.

For administrative purposes the sub-division is divided into three police circles, *viz*, Gaibanda, with the out-post of Sadullapur; Gobindganj, with the out-posts of Palāshbāri and Shāghāta and Sundarganj. The population according to the census of 19[illegible] was 520,184 as compared with 463,601 in 1891. This is the most progressive part of the district, the population having increased by 12½ per cent. during the decade. This is attributed to the

* Vide *ante*, p. 8.

opening of the railway, the rapid extension of jute cultivation, and the impetus given by both these circumstances to immigration from the unhealthy thānās in the north-west of the district, and from the more thickly populated districts in the south, *viz*., Bogra, Pabna and Mymensingh. The density of population is 712, 667 and 661 persons per square mile, in the thānās of Gaibanda, Gobindganj and Sungarganj respectively, as compared with the district average of 617. The Muhammadans outnumber the Hindus in the proportion of 5 to 3, the predominance being most marked in the Gobindganj thānā. The population includes 3,400 Santāls and 300 Oraons—who have settled mostly in the Gaibanda thānā.

The population is distributed among 1,427 villages and the head-quarters town. The most important villages are:—Gobindganj, which has a police station, a sub-registry office, a dispensary and a considerable trade in rice; Sundarganj, which has the same institutions as Gobindganj, and a large trade in jute, rice and potatoes; Kamārjāni, the biggest mart for country produce in the sub-division, Tulshighāt, a large mart, where a fair (*melā*) is held annually; Kāmdia, the chief centre of the rice trade in the *khiyār* tract; Birāt, 8 miles from Gobindganj, where an annual fair is held and which is alleged to be the Birāt mentioned in the Mahābhārata as the hiding-place of the Pāndavas; Fulchāri and Bardhankote, dispensaries, pounds, ferries and village roads are under the control of the sub-divisional Local Board.

Kakina Estate.—Kākina, or, as it was formerly written, Kānkina, was one of the six divisions or *chaklās* of Kuchwāra—the portion of the Koch kingdom which was last conquered by the Muhammadans. The latter pursued the policy of leaving in possession as *choudhrīs*, the persons who had been in charge of the collections under the Koch kings and their title was confirmed by the East India Company at the permanent settlement. In spite of the stringency exercised subsequent to the decennial settlement in the realisation of the revenue, Kākina did not meet with the fate of so many other estates and has remained practically entire to the present day and in the hands of the same family. It is on record, however, that in 1781, the zamindār of Kākina, a lady, being unable to meet the revenue demand fled to Calcutta and that, endeavours made to apprehend her being unsuccessful, some of her lands were put to sale. At the present day the Kākina lands lie chiefly in the Kāliganj, Lālmonirhāt and Sadr thānās. The estate also owns property in the Gobindganj thāna. The land revenue is Rs. 58,819 and the gross rental is about Rs. 4,00,000.

Dr. Buchanan in 1809, noticed that Ram Rudra Chaudhuri, of Kākina, was one of the few zemindārs of the district who showed any real politeness to strangers, that he was a patron of learning and "that his residence, including gardens, roads and avenues, is neat." Dr. Hamilton in 1820 noticed the profuse, though some-

what indiscriminate, charity of the members of this house. This tradition has been well maintained by Ram Rudra's successors and, in particular, by the late Mahima Ranjan Ray Chaudhuri on whom the Government conferred the title of Raja. The estate maintains a dispensary and a High School at Kākina, and a Middle English School at Rangpur. The residence at Kākina is a stately mansion with well-laid out grounds. The present proprietor is the Hon'ble Rājkumār Mahendra Ranjan Ray Chaudhuri.

Kurigram.—Head-quarters town of the sub-division of the same name, situated on the right bank of the Dharla river in 25° 50′ N. and 89° 40′ E. The town is one of great antiquity and there is a tradition,* that it acquired its name from the fact that it was assigned as a place of residence to a *kūdi*, that is, twenty families, of the Mech tribe, who were related to a ruler of Kuchwāra in ancient times. These Mechs now call themselves Kūris —a pure functional Bengal sub-caste. The caste is known as Mech-Kūri, Bara-Kūri or simply Kūri. According to Mr. Risley they are "a sub-division of Meches who sell oil." Their number in Rangpur is small, and in dress and customs they resemble the Rājbanshis, but are inferior to them, socially. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, in 1809, described the town, which he calls Kuriganj, as a place of considerable trade, with 200 houses surrounded by gardens. The place is also known as Kurigaon. The population according to the census of 1901 was 1,777.

The town is well laid out and enjoys a reputation for healthiness. The chief institutions and buildings are the sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a jail, a dispensary, a High School, a registration office, a public library and an inspection bungalow. A voluntary organisation, known as the Sanitary Committee, looks after the sanitation and conservancy of the town, and maintains a public garden. Kurigrām is the terminus of the Tīsta-Kurigrām branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway and the line passes through its main street. The railway formerly extended to Jātrapur, which was a port of call for Assam river steamers. It is now proposed to extend the line to Chilmāri. There is a large bazaar in the town and a brisk trade in country produce is carried on.

Kurigram Sub-Division.—The north-eastern sub-division of the Rangpur district, lying between 25° 23′ and 26° 14′ N., and 89° 20′ and 89° 53′ E., with an area of 942 square miles. The sub-division is bounded on the north by the Cooch Behar State and on the west and east by the rivers Brahmaputra and Tīsta, up to their junction, south of Chilmāri. A small slice of its territory lies on the left bank of the Brahmaputra, at the foot of the Gāro Hills. The river Dharla flows through the middle, while the northern parts are drained by the rivers Sankos or Dūdhkumar,

* The Cooch Behar State, by Rai Calica Doss Dutt Bahadur, 1903, p. 129.

Gangādhar, Gingiram, Fulkumār, Girai and Nilkumār, and the southern by the Ratnai, Sati and Bāmni. Much of the area along the east border consists of newly-formed sandbanks and some tracts in the north are under jungle; the rest of the sub-division is very fertile and produces good crops of rice, jute, mustard and tobacco. The Eastern Bengal State Railway passes through the sub-division from Tista to Mughalhāt, and from Tista to Kurigrām—the latter being a narrow-gauge line.

The sub-division was constituted in 1875, and for administrative purposes is divided into four police circles, *viz*, Kurigrām, Ulipur, with a road-post at Chilmāri; Lalmonirhāt; and Nāgeshwari with a road-post at Fulkumār. The population in 1901 was 514,392, as compared with 507,711 in 1891. The increase was not greater because there had been a loss of area by diluvion and outbreaks of cholera had frequently occurred as the labour route to Assam formerly passed through Kurigrām. The population is contained in one town, Kurigrām, the sub divisional head-quarters, and 1,518 villages The density of population is well above the district average of 617 in Kurigrām (660) and Lalmonirhāt (683) thānās, but considerably below it in Nāgeshwari (504) and Ulipur (487). The last named thānā, however, is receiving an ever-increasing stream of immigrants from Pabna, Mymensingh and Dacca; and Nāgeshwari has a small colony of Oraons. The Muhammadans preponderate, with a strength of 324,474, while the Hindus number 189,425; the preponderance is most marked in the two southern thānās of Kurigrām and Ulipur

The most important places in the sub-divisions are :—Chilmāri, an ancient village, on the Brahmaputra, where, once a year, large crowds of pilgrims gather for the Varūni bathing festival; Ulipur, the head-quarters of the Bāharband Estate; Lālmonirhāt, an important railway junction and place of trade; Mughalhāt, founded in the early days of the Mughal conquest, and now a busy jute centre; and Kulaghāt, a large mart on the Dharla. Dispensaries, ferries, pounds and village communications are looked after by a Local Board, subordinate to the District Board.

Mahipur Estate.—This is the largest estate owned by a Muhammadan zamindār in the district. The founder of the family which now owns this estate was Arīf Muhammad Chaudhari, a general in the service of the Cooch Behar Raja who early in the eighteenth century was appointed *chaudhuri* to collect the revenue of *chaklā* Padam Narayan, subsequently known as Kārjerhāt or Kāzirhāt. Arīf Muhammad is said to have given away the greater part of the *chakla* to his friends retaining only 4½ annas to himself. Two annas given away to Sitārām Ray Chaudhuri are still owned by his descendants, the Tushbāndar zamīndārs and their estate is even now known as "two annas Kāzirhāt." One of Arīf Muhammad's successors, Muhammad Amin, with whom the Permanent Settlement is said to have been made, created a number

of rent-free tenures, and another, Enatulla Chaudhuri, who inherited the estate in 1832, is said to have further impoverished it by his extravagance and luxury. The constant use of perfumes is said to have unhinged his mind. Throwing rupees into the Tista river and setting fire to newly-built houses were his favourite pastimes. Acting under the advice of physicians who recommended the brain of the paddy-heron (*bog*) as a cure for his brain trouble, he acquired the name of " heron-eating Chaudhuri " (*bog khāwa Chaudhuri*). His excesses involved the estate in debt and a great part of " 4½ annas Karjerhāt " was sold to satisfy the creditors The present proprietor, who inherited the estate in 1883, is Khan Bahadur Abdul Majīd Choudhury. He resides at Mahipur, 10 miles north of Rangpur. He received his title in 1898 in recognition of his public services in the capacity of Honorary Magistrate and otherwise. The estate pays a revenue of Rs. 3,000 and has a gross-rental of Rs. 25,000.

Nilphamari.—Head-quarters town of the sub-division of the same name, situated in 25° 58′ N., and 88° 51′ E. on the Eastern Bengal State Railway. The town came into existence when it was made the head-quarters of the sub-division in 1882. The derivation of the name is uncertain. It has been suggested that it means *nīl*, indigo, and *phamāri*, vat. The town contains the ruins of an indigo factory. The population at the last census was 2,396, but is probably much more now. The town is about 2 miles from the railway station, and is 1½ mile long and half a mile broad. It is built on a sandy plain and contains much open space. Wells are the only source of water-supply and serve the purpose admirably, except at the height of the rains when the water rises to within a foot of the ground-level and becomes contaminated by surface drainage. August and September are consequently the most unhealthy months of the year. The town is singularly wanting in good approach roads and its trade has not expanded with the same rapidity as that of Domār, Saidpur or Darwāni. Lighting and conservancy are in the hands of a voluntary organisation, styled the Sanitary Board, of which the sub-divisional officer is president The District Board maintains an inspection bungalow for the use of district officers and, on payment, the general public.

The town contains the sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a police station, a subsidiary jail, a charitable dispensary, an aided High School (with boarding-houses for Hindus and Muhammadans), a Lower Primary girls' school, a Guru-Training school, a public library and a native theatre. The population consists partly of Government employees, mukteārs, pleaders and others connected with the courts and public institutions ; and partly of persons connected with the bazaar, where a brisk trade in jute, country produce and cloth is carried. The natives of the sub-division are very backward. The ministerial offices and the

also in their hands or in those of Marwaris. There are two joint-stock companies, one of which does a banking and the other a trading business.

Nilphamari Sub-division.—North-western sub-division of the district, lying between 25° 23′ and 26° 14′ N., and 89° 20′ and 89° 53′ E., situated along the right bank of the Tista, with an area of 648 square miles. It is drained by the Sarbāmangala, Jūbaneswari, Mora Tista and the Ghāghāt rivers, and the Eastern Bengal State Railway skirts its western boundary from Saidpur to Chilhāti stations. The climate is healthy and the soil fertile ; the chief crops being paddy, jute, tobacco and ginger. The leading landowner is the proprietor of the Dimlā Estate.

The sub-division was formed in 1875, with head-quarters at Bāgdogra, near Domār. In 1882, the head-quarters were transferred to Nilphamāri. For administrative purposes the sub-division is divided into three police circles, *viz*, Nilphamāri with the out-post of Saidpur, Dimla with the out-post of Domār and Jaldhāka. It contains three towns, *viz.*, Nilphamāri, Domār and Saidpur, and 370 villages, of which the most important are Darwāni, a great jute centre; Kishoreganj, which possesses a sub-registry office and a charitable dispensary ; and Barngāri, Nowtāra, Ramganj, Bhawāniganj, Bābrejhar, Thākurganj and Shutibāri, which are small centres of trade. Brass utensils (*ghōti*) and mortars and pestles for pounding betel leaves and areca nuts are cast at Gomnati (thānā Dimla) by Muhammadan artisans known as *katāris ;* cooking utensils (*dekchis*) are prepared at Jhunagāchha Chepāni (thānā Jaldhāka) and *endi* silk and *chāt* (sacking) are woven in several villages of Dimla thānā.

The population according to the census of 1901 was 461,314, as compared with 447,764 in 1891, the density being 712 per square mile as compared with the district average of 617. Nilphamāri thānā, with 750 persons to the square mile, is the most thickly populated mofussil area in the district. Of the total population 244,620 are Muhammadans and 216,207 Hindus, the preponderance of the former element being less marked here than in any other sub-division. The Christians number 334 and consist almost wholly of railway employees.

The dispensaries, ferries and pounds in the sub-division are managed by a Local Board, subordinate to the District Board, which also looks after village roads. About 6 miles east of Domār are the ruins of the fortress of Dharmapāl—a king of the Hindu period.*

Rangpur.—Head-quarters of the district of Rangpur, situated in 25° 45′ N., and 89° 15′ E., on the east bank of the Ghāghāt.

Area. The area within municipal limits is 9·3 square miles. The town is 7 miles long with a width varying from a mile to half a

* Vide *ante*, pp. 20, 31.

mile. It is situated in a flat plain without elevations of any kind, and there is no scenery to speak of. The populated portions of the town are interpersed with stretches of cultivated land and groves of trees and bamboo thickets. The branch of the Ghāghāt, on which the town lies, has long since ceased to be an active stream, the flowing river being a few miles to the west. The snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas are frequently visible during the winter months.

Population. The population according to the census of 1901 was 15,960, of whom 9,330 were Hindus, 6,406 Muhammadans and 26 Christians. Dr. Buchanan in 1809, with the excess which characterised all his estimates, put down the population at 15,000 to 20,000. The census of 1872 gave a total of 14,845, to which the Muhammadans contributed 8,060, and the Hindus 6,633. The relative strength of the two communities has now been inverted. Until the railway was extended to Rangpur, the trade of the town was small and inelastic. This circumstance and the great deficiency of women—there being only 5,882 females to 10,078 males—account for the meagre increase in population since 1872. A large proportion of the people of the better class leave their wives at their village homes. For the decade ending in 1902, the average annual birth-rate was 15 2; in 1908 it was only 11·5. There is a tendency among the Hindus and Muhammadans to form separate *pāras* or quarters; thus Kerānipāra and Senpāra are occupied chiefly by the former while Munshipāra and Mussalmanpāra are strongholds of the latter.

History. The origin of the name Rangpur has been discussed in Chapter I. The Muhammadans at first called their new conquests in Kuchwāra by the name of Fakīrkūndi and they probably made their first entry near where Mahiganj now stands, confronting Kūndi which they already held, on the opposite side of the Ghāghāt. There is a tradition to the effect that Mahiganj owes its name to the circumstance that Shah Jalāl Bokhāri, a contemporary of Ismail Ghāzi, came riding to that place on a fish (*mahi*). The Muhammadans are said to have destroyed an old Hindu temple and founded the suburb of Nawābganj on its site. The present town of Rangpur thus began its existence with the Mughal conquest. Neither history nor legend affords any indication of the existence of an older town in the neighbourhood. No historical or traditional interest attaches to the *mauzās* known as Rangpur, parts of which are included within municipal limits, and the most important portion of the town lies mainly within *mauzā* Rādhaballav. When the district came under British rule, Mahiganj continued to be the head-quarters of the administration. The residents' bungalows and the Company's factories stretched along the banks of the eastern branch of the Ghāgbāt. When, in consequence of changes in the course of the river Tista, at the end of ... of the nineteenth century, this

Company's offices and factories were removed to Dhāp, west of Nawābganj, where they were within easy reach of the western channel of the Ghāghāt which continued to be a flowing stream and was then an important waterway. Dr. Buchanan states that Dhāp is derived from *Dhāp Rājya*, the name of *Raja Hava (Bhava)* Chandra's principality. The town being of modern origin, no buildings or monuments of antiquarian interest exist.

The town. The town is a collection of distinct villages, grouped together for the purpose of a municipality. Mahiganj and Nawābganj, three miles apart from one another, are the commercial portions of the town. Between them, a new quarter known as Lālbāgh has sprung up around the railway statalon. Dhāp is the official section of the town.

Dhāp. To begin with Dhāp, in the extreme west is the jail. Nearer Nawābganj are the civil and criminal courts and the public offices. Here also are the residences of the Collector, the Judge and the other district officers. These buildings are of recent construction, their predecessors having been entirely demolished in the earthquake of 1897 The present Judge's House stands on the site of the Company's residence, which was a handsome two-storeyed structure. When the Company's trading operations were closed, this building was purchased by a local zemindār who converted it into residential quarters and leased it to district officers. Close to the criminal courts, on the west, is the new Zilla School building. This school was first established in 1832, in a building given by the Raja of Cooch Behar, and was opened by Lord Bentinck, the only Viceroy, who has visited the district. Close to the school building is a high mound of earth to which a pretty story attaches. It is said that a court peon sent a *nazr* of one sovereign to the late Queen Victoria on the occasion of her jubilee. The present was graciously acknowledged and returned. The peon said he could not take back a gift made to his sovereign and requested the Collector to dispose of the money as he thought proper. The latter spent it in deepening a tank and erecting a mound with the earth excavated, as a memorial of the loyalty of a humble servant of the Crown. Immediately to the east of the criminal courts is the *maidān*, about one-third of a mile long and one-fourth broad. The race-course encircles the *maidān*, and in the centre are the football and cricket grounds. At the west end of the *maidān* is the Station Club House, while the houses of several zemindārs line the northern boundary. To the east of the *maidān* is the farm of the Rangpur Agricultural Association; and still further east are the buildings of the District Board office, the Municipal office, the dispensary and hospital, the public library, the native theatre and the dâk bungalow.

Nawābganj The population of Nawābganj, the new and rising section of the town, consists mostly of pleaders, muktears, ministerial Government officers and shopkeepers. There are also a few

zemindārs. Numerous masonry buildings are now springing up, but none of them call for special notice. There is a large and flourishing bazaar and a daily market. In Munshipāra is the tomb of Maulāna Kerāmat Ali, who is held in great veneration by Muhammadans and pilgrims from district Chittagong have been known to visit his shrine.

bāgh. The Lālbāgh section of the town is of recent origin and centres round the railway station. The Rangpur Tobacco Company's factory and several jute warehouses are located here. There is a flourishing bazaar, and *hāt*, in which fish imported by rail is a principal commodity.

higanj. Mahiganj is the oldest section of the town. The streets are narrow and many of the masonry buildings are of great age. Dr. Buchanan in 1809 found that Mahiganj was the only portion of Rangpur which had the appearance of a town. Several of the leading zamindārs, including those of Tajhāt and Dimla, have handsome residences here. The Naib-Nāzim's jail of Muhammadan times was situated near the present Sanibāri Kacheri, and the locality is still known as *jail-khāna*. Close to the residence of the Tajhāt zamindār are a Jain temple, reputed to be more than a hundred years old, and two Sikh temples, known as "*kachi Sangat*" and "*packa Sangat*," respectively, which are managed by Punjab Khetris. There are also two old and important Muhammadan mosques, which are believed to be the monuments of two reputed saints, *viz*, Shāh Jalāl Bokhāri and Gora Saiyad. The former has been recently thoroughly renovated by a local Muhammadan physician who has also added a *madrasa* building. At the east end of Mahiganj there is a wooden car known as *Rām Ratha* in connection with which an annual festival is held during the Durga Pūja holidays, which is unlike any celebration in other parts of Bengal. A fair (*melā*) is held at the time of the *Ratha* festival and attracts many visitors, especially women, from the neighbouring villages. On the road from Mahiganj to Dum-Dum Ghāt stands a temple of Jagannāth, built more than a hundred years ago and known as Ranglāl Nazir's temple. Ranglāl was a Nazir of the Collector of Rangpur, whose head-quarters were then at Mahiganj.

Dr. Buchanan speaks of the town of "Ranggopoor" as being composed of Mahiganj, Nawābganj, Mīrganj and Nūrdiganj. The two latter villages are now entirely in ruins. Close to them is another village, popularly known as Taunfat, where formerly the *adālat* (court) of the Naib-Nāzim of Rangpur and the offices of the Collector of Rangpur were located. It was here that the late Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the celebrated Hindu reformer and founder of the Brāhmo religion, served as Dewan of the Collector. In Taunfat also exist the ruins of an ancient mosque popularly [illegible] Akbar. At a little

brick walls, but now overgrown with jungle; it is said to contain the remains of a European lady known as Lāl Bibi.

There is a large and flourishing bazaar at Mahiganj. Formerly several important banking firms were established here, including that of Jagat Seth of Murshidabad. At the present day the trade is mostly in the hands of Marwaris.*

Institutions.

Among the public institutions of Rangpur may be mentioned branches of the Anjūman Islāmia or Muhammadan Association, the Kāyasth Sabha and the Bangiya Sāhitya Parishāt—a literary society. There is a public library which was founded as long ago as 1832 through the exertions of the Kūndi zemindars. Its valuable collection of books was entirely destroyed in the earthquake of 1897. The Dharma Sabha is a purely religious institution. The native Christians of the Protestant faith and the Brāhmos have small churches. Two vernacular newspapers, the *Rangpur Bartabaha* and the *Rangpur Darpan*, are published weekly. The former was started as long ago as 1847, but has had a spasmodic existence. Their circulation is very limited and they exercise little influence on public opinion. The editors of both papers fell foul of the sedition laws recently and were convicted. Among other institutions may be mentioned the hospital, the Nawābganj and Mahiganj dispensaries, the veterinary hospital, the zilla school, the Tājhāt High School at Mahiganj which is maintained by the Tājhāt estate, the *madrasa*, a training school for teachers, a girls' school, the Rangpur Agricultural Association and Farm and the Bailey Gobinda Lāl Technical School, which is affiliated to the Shibpur College. The Government Experimental Farm is at Būrihāt, 5 miles to the north. The club has an unpretentious but comfortable building. The race-course has not been used for many years, the European population being now limited to a handful of officials. The town has a telephone service.

Climate.

Rangpur has always enjoyed an unenviable reputation for unhealthiness. The Mughal officers used to migrate to Murshidabad every year during the rains. The town is pressed close between the marshes on the north and the stagnant Ghāghāt on the south, and the natural drainage is bad. Insanitary pools and hollows abound everywhere and jungle grows with tropical rapidity. The average rainfall is 83 inches and heavy dews are experienced in the cold weather. The climate is therefore damp and malarious and rheumatic affections are common. Rangpur is not, however, subject to extremes of heat and cold. The temperature rarely exceeds 90° at the hottest time of the year and the winter months are pleasant. The country remains green all the year round and the roads are lined with shady trees. The visitations of cholera and small-pox are rare and never of a severe nature.

* I am indebted to Rai Sarat Chandra Chatterji Bahadur, formerly Chairman of the Municipality, for much information regarding the antiquities of the town.

Since the earthquake a remarkable improvement in the health of the town has taken place, and it is suggested that this is not a mere coincidence. The town is certainly drier than before and changes of levels, facilitating drainage, have probably resulted from the great convulsion of 1897. The houses also are better constructed now and medical relief is more easily available. Another cause of improved health is the gradual silting of the Chikli and Kukrūl *bhīls*. In 1908 Rangpur had a death-rate of only 15·5 per mille, and it is now almost the healthiest town in the division.

Drainage

There are no roadside drains except in small areas in the Nawābganj and Mahiganj sections of the town. The natural drainage is into the *bhīls* on the north and the inert Ghāghāt on the south. The first attempt at improving the drainage was made when a canal, seven miles long, known as Ghose's canal was excavated about 25 years ago. It connected the *bhīls* on the north with the flowing stream of the Ghāghāt 5 miles to the west of the town. The channel of the Ghāghāt flowing through the town was next excavated and cuts made across its windings so as to shorten its course and increase its current. These drainage works are known as Ghose's canal, after Dr Ghose, the then Civil Surgeon, and Skrine's channel, after Mr. Skrine, the then Collector. It was hoped that these operations would result in the effective drainage of both the northern and southern portions of the town, but these expectations were not realised and the earthquake of 1897 rendered both canals absolutely useless. A new scheme of drainage is now under consideration.

Water-supply.

The water-supply of the town is derived entirely from wells. The Municipality has sunk a number of masonry wells for this purpose in different parts of the town and the water is of good quality. The soil of Rangpur, which is pure sand a few feet from the surface, will not allow of any good tanks being excavated.

Lighting and roads.

There are 8·7 miles of metalled road in the Municipality. The roads are lighted with kerosine lamps, of which the number at present is 192; but there is much room for improvement in this department.

Rangpur Sub-division.—Headquarters sub-division of the district, situated between 25° 18′ and 26° 16′ N. and 88° 56′ and 89° 31′ E., with an area of 1,141 square miles. For administrative purposes the division is divided into six police circles, *viz.*, Kāliganj, on the north of the river Tīsta and Kotwāli (Sadr), Mahiganj (with the outpost of Kāliganj), Bādarganj, Mithapūkur and Pīrganj, on the south of the Tīsta. Kāliganj is drained by the Sonāmati and other small streams into the Tīsta and by the Mālda or Ratnai Nadi into the Dharla. The remaining thānās of the sub-division, which comprise the west central portion of the district, are drained by the Jūbaneswari and Akhīra—both tributaries of the Karatoya, the Ghāghāt, and the Manās which is a branch

the Tista. Pirganj and Mithāpūkur are the only thānās through which the railway does not pass. The climate is unhealthy, particularly in the thānās of Mahiganj and Mithāpūkur, which abound in *bhils* and marshes. Both these thānās lost population in the decade between 1891 and 1901. The soil in the western portions of the Bādarganj, Mithāpūkur and Pirganj thānās consists of red ferruginous clay, known as *khiyār*, which yields only one good crop in the year, *viz.*, winter rice. The soil in the rest of the sub-division consists of a sandy loam, known as *poli*, which is very suitable for the cultivaton of jute, paddy, and, especially in the tracts bordering on the Tista, tobacco. Potatoes and mustard are important winter crops. Sugar-cane is largely grown on high lands along the west border, and a considerable quantity of raw sugar (*gūr*) is manufactured.

The population, according to the census of 1901, is 658,291, as compared with 646,388 in 1891; and the density is 577 persons per square mile as compared with 712,546 and 683 in the sub-divisions of Nilphamāri, Kurigrām and Gaibandha, respectively. Rangpur (Kotwāli) thānā has the highest density in the district, *viz.*, 776; while Pirganj and Mithapūkur thānās with 442 and 473 respectively stand lowest in the scale. The proportion of Muhammadans to Hindus is two to one, except in the Kāliganj thānā, where the Hindus are in a majority. The population includes 1,308 Santāls and 1,318 Oraons. The sub-division has one town, *viz.*, Rangpur, the district head-quarters, and 1,897 villages, the most important of which are the railway stations of Bādarganj, Kaunia, Hātibanda and Bhōtemāri; the zamindāri seats of Kākina, Sādyapūskūrni, Monthana and Mahipur; and the trading centres of Kālidaha, Pānialghāt, Jalālganj and Balua.

Saidpur.—*A town in Nilphamāri sub-division in 25° 47′N. and 88°54′E.* It is the headquarters of the northern section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway. The Chief Medical Officer of that Railway and a Superintendent of Railway Police are also stationed here. The District Traffic Superintendent is an Honorary Magistrate. There are large locomotive and engineering workshops employing about 1,700 men, who are mostly Behāris, Punjābis and Bengalis from other districts. There is a considerable trade in jute and some 13 baling presses, owned by European and Indian firms, are at work in the season. The coolie population is mostly imported from Behar and the Upper Provinces and comprises a large number of ex-convicts and bad characters.

The population in 1901 was 5,848, but has increased rapidly since then. There are 375 Christians, mostly Europeans and Eurasians in the service of the railway. There are two churches, one Anglican and the other Roman Catholic; four schools including a High School and a day school for European boys and girls; a club house for the railway officers and an institute for the subordinates; a charitable dispensary maintained by the railway, with hospital accommodation for Europeans and Indians; and a police

out-post. The District Board has a well equipped inspection bungalow. There are two co-operative credit societies, but their condition is not flourishing. The railway portion of the town, which came into existence on the construction of the line in 1879, is well laid out, and is remarkable for its large and commodious brick houses, its metalled roads, and its general cleaniness and healthiness. The railway employees form a company of the Eastern Bengal State Railway Volunteers, 157 strong.

Tajhat Estate.—The Tājhāt estate is one of the largest in Rangpur. It is stated that the founder of the family, Mannā Lāl Roy, was one of the Hindu Khatri adherents of the Sikh religion, who was obliged to emigrate from the Punjab to escape the persecution of the Mughal Emperors early in the eighteenth century. He was a jeweller by profession and settled at Mahiganj, then the head-quarters of the district. The word *tāj* means a jewelled and embroidered cap and hence the locality in which he lived came to be known as Tājhāt. Mannā Lāl Roy acquired a large fortune which he invested in land. His grandson Dhanāpat Roy married a grand-daughter of Ratan Lāl Roy, of Nya Dumka, another Punjab immigrant, who had received several *tāluqs* from the Government, in recognition of his services during a Santāl rising. Dhanāpat Roy's grandson, Upendra Lāl Roy, died before reaching majority and the estate was inherited by his uncle Giridhāri Lāl Roy, who was a munsiff in the Provincial Judicial Service. Giridhāri Lāl Roy, having no living issue, adopted Gobinda Lāl, son of Ishwar Chandra Das, a merchant of Calcutta, who succeeded to the estate in 1879. Gobindal Lāl Roy was a man of great public spirit and liberality, his benefactions including a donation of Rs. 1,10,000 to the Lewis Jubilee Sanatorium at Darjiling. He was created Raja in 1888, Raja Bahadur in 1892 and Maharaja in 1896. His life had a tragic termination in 1897, when he was mortally injured by the fall of his house in the earthquake. He was succeeded by his son, Maharājkumār Gopal Lal Roy, the present proprietor. During his minority which lasted till 1908, the estate was managed by the Court of Wards.

The estate comprises revenue-paying estates and *patnī*, *makararī* and other tenures, in the Rangpur, Dinājpur, Bogra, Jalpaiguri and Purnea districts. The Rangpur properties which form the greater portion are distributed over 18 thānās. The revenue paid to Government is Rs. 67,296 and the gross-rental is Rs. 3,50,000. The estate maintains a High School and a charitable dispensary at Tājhāt in Mahiganj.

APPENDIX (*vide page* 20).

THE QUEEN'S PRAYER.

FROM MANIK CHANDRA'S SONG, THE "EPIC OF [illegible]

[*Rendered from Dr. Grierson's translation.*]

Nay, nay, my king, to distant lands thou shalt not fare
  Nor desolate the life that breathes for thee alone.
Few are my years, no grey yet mingles with my hair:
  Wilt widow me, my lord, before my bridehood's done?

In dreams thy face will haunt me, and my arms close pressed
  Will seek to hold thee. E'en the poorest wife and bride
Upon her bosom bends her master's head to rest:
  Shall sorrow be *my* mate and love unsatisfied?

The voice of scandal ne'er hath spared a widow's fame;
  Therefore, beloved, if thou goest, I go with thee!
In hunger and in thirst, oh king, my care thou'lt claim,
  The night I will beguile with song and poesy.

In summer's heat, a palm-leaf fan shall still thy sighs;
  Against thy breast I'll nestle close, when cold winds blow;
And holy Indra's joy—the lap of five score wives—
  Alone I'll give. With thee, beloved, let me go.

Now am I young and comely, worthy of a king;
  Will youth and beauty stay or suffer to be tied
'Gainst thy return? My banian tree! to thee I cling,
  A helpless creeper. Bide with me, my husband, bide!

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